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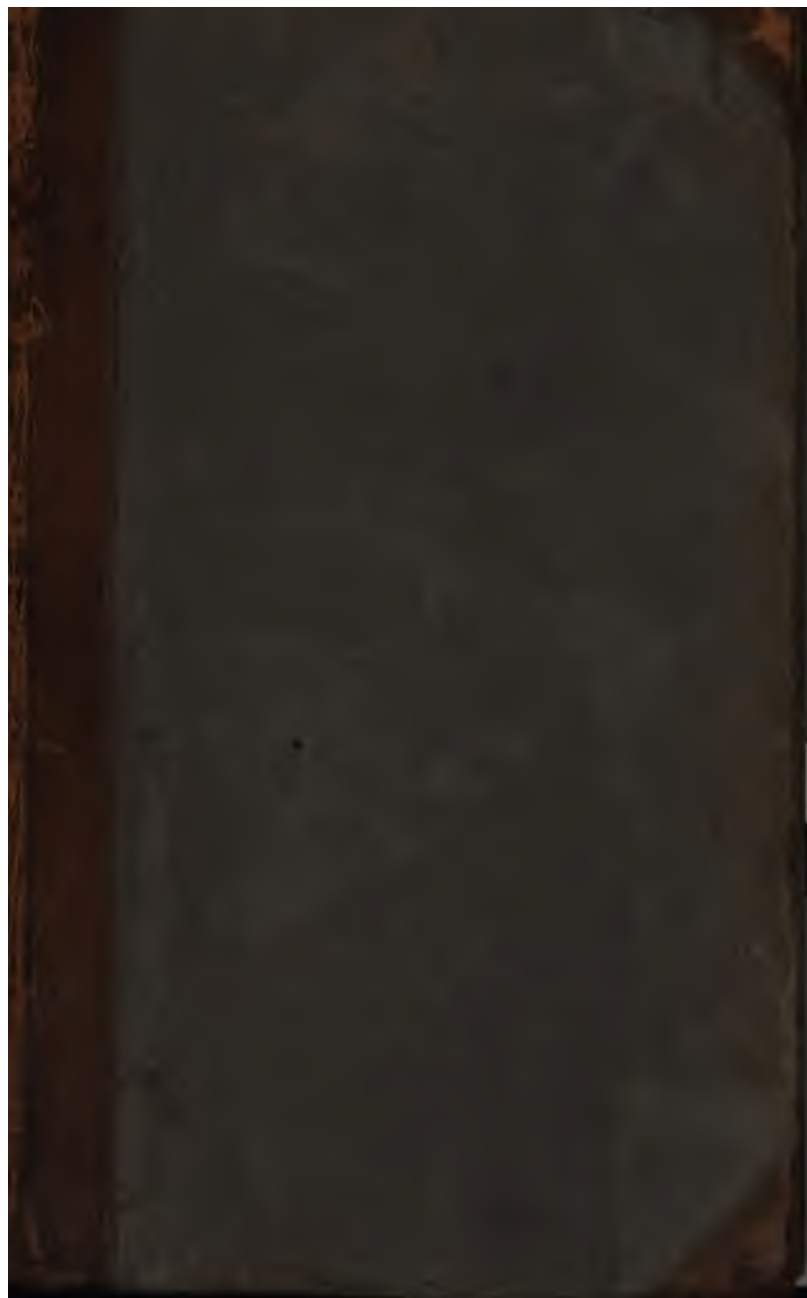
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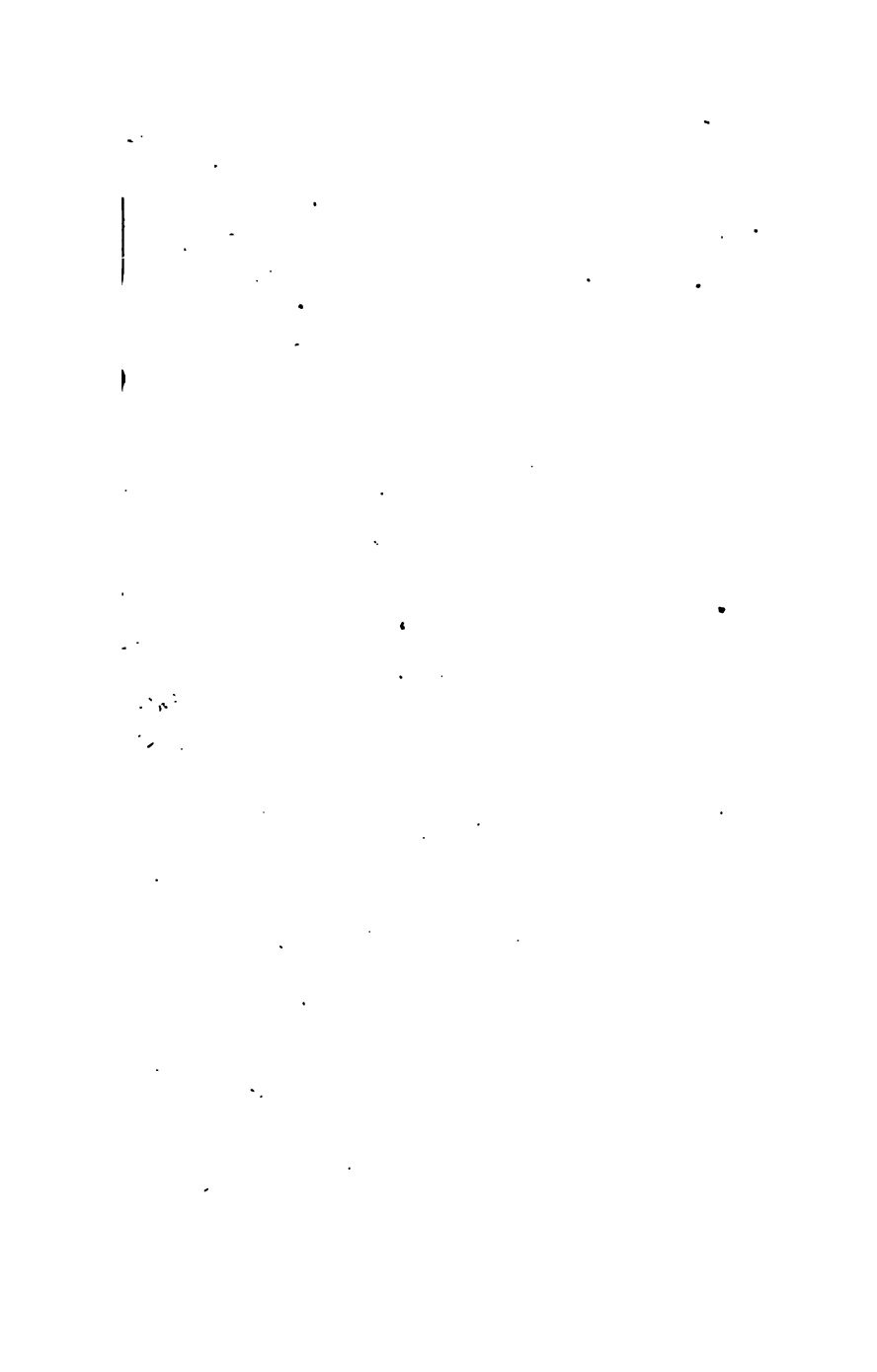


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NOCTURNAL VISIT.

A TALE.

IN FOUR VOLUMES

BY

MARIA REGINA ROCHE,

AUTHOR OF

THE CHILDREN OF THE ABBEY,

MAID OF THE HAMLET, VICAR OF LANSDOWNE,

AND

CLERMONT.

“Thou com’st in such a questionable shape,

“That I will speak to thee.”



SHAKESPEARE,

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THE
NOCTURNAL VISIT.

CHAP. I.

“ In struggling with misfortunes lies the proof of virtue.”

SHAKESPEAR.

ABOUT a week after the masquerade, as Jacintha was walking, at the close of day, with Egbert, through a shady lane contiguous to the village, she suddenly beheld, in an opening leading to the high road, a post-chaise and four.— Egbert eagerly drew her towards it; the door lay open, and, to her great surprise, she beheld Woodville seated in it; but before she could make any

VOL. II. B enquiry,



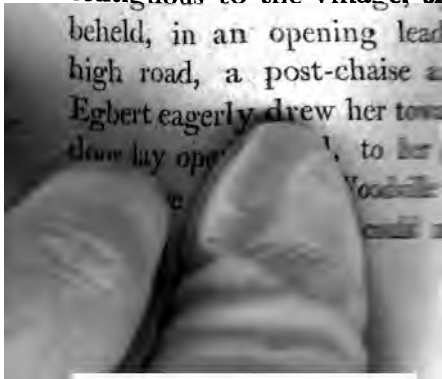
THE
NOCTURNAL VISIT.

CHAP. I.

"In struggling with misfortunes lies the proof of virtue."

SHAKESPEARE

ABOUT a week after the masquerade as Jacintha was walking, at the close of the day, with Egbert, through a shaded avenue contiguous to the village, she suddenly beheld, in an opening leading to a high road, a post-chaise and four. Egbert eagerly drew her towards it, and she lay open to her view.



enquiry, Egbert snatching her up in his arms, placed her in it, then leaping in himself, the door was instantly closed, and the postillions set off with the utmost expedition.

“ Good Heavens ! Egbert,” said Jacintha, as soon as she recovered the power of utterance, which the suddenness of this action for a few minutes deprived her of, “ what do you mean ? ”

Egbert caught her to his bosom, and, after some passionate expressions of tenderness, briefly gave her the explanation she demanded.

Jacintha highly resented his suspicions respecting her father, to which he declared the project he had so happily carried into effect was owing ; they were suspicions, she said, not more groundless than injurious ; and she absolutely insisted on his dropping his present

present design—a design which, if persevered in, could not fail of exposing them to ridicule, well-known as was their situation with regard to each other.

Egbert was deaf to her entreaties, and tried to silence her remonstrances by endeavouring to convince her he had reason for his fears ; of this, however, she could not be persuaded, and continued to expostulate, though without effect, as the chaise still proceeded in its first direction ; but a sudden stop was put to its velocity : in turning the sharp angle of a road, one of the hind-wheels flew off, and laid it not very gently upon the ground.

As soon as Jacintha was disengaged from the broken vehicle, which was not done without some difficulty, she renewed her entreaties to Egbert to relinquish, what she termed, his rash design.

“ This accident,” said she, “ seems a warning to you to do so.”

Egbert, though vexed and provoked, could not forbear laughing at what he called her superstition; and, without regarding her remonstrances, hurried her on to a small public-house, at a little distance from the spot where the misadventure happened. Here he procured a messenger to go to a neighbouring town for another carriage, nothing of the kind being to be procured at this place; then following Jacintha into the room, whither Woodville had conducted her, he exerted all his eloquence to try and calm her agitation, and reconcile her to his scheme. He painted, in the most forcible colours, the misery occasioned by his fears respecting Lord Gwytherin—fears which he had no other method of terminating than by the present step; and concluded by conjuring her not to cloud the happiness

NOCTURNAL VISIT.

ness of the present hour by retaining her displeasure.

“I could have wished you to act otherwise,” replied Jacintha, whose countenance evinced the perturbation of her mind; “I still wish it, because I am convinced your fears are groundless;—did I think otherwise—Oh Egbert! you know my heart.”

“I do,” cried Egbert, passionately and straining her to his bosom as he spoke, “and therefore depend on being forgiven.”

The sudden opening of the door made him hastily turn round, and he beheld to his unutterable astonishment and equal dismay, Mr. Greville entering.

No real or imaginary spectre ever excited greater consternation than was now raised by the appearance of the

worthy man. Woodville looked confounded. Egbert stood wildly staring at him, and Jacintha turned pale, and trembled, fearful that he would scarcely be brought to believe she was ignorant of Egbert's intentions, and confident that to think she had openly defied his authority, would provoke his serious displeasure.

“ I see,” said Mr. Greville, advancing from the door, where he had paused for a minute to survey the astonished group, “ I see I was not mistaken, and that my presence is not more unexpected than undesired.”

Egbert, who perceived he could no longer hope to persevere in his journey, now determined to learn, if possible, why his marriage had hitherto, or might still be delayed, as he could not be more his own master, when of age, than he was at present ;—he also resolved, if

Mr.

Mr. Greville's answers were not perfectly satisfactory, to be very explicit in acquainting him with the motives which had led to the step his presence interrupted; better able to brook the idea of incurring his resentment, than that of continuing any longer in incertitude and consequent misery concerning Jacintha.

“I can no longer delay,” cried Mr. Greville, as soon as Egbert had concluded the vehement enquiries which passion and anxiety dictated, “I can no longer,” continued he, in a solemn tone, “delay acquainting you with the motives which have hitherto, and must still, I fear, even beyond the period I mentioned, make me defer your union with Jacintha; I have long wished to inform you of them, but I still wanted resolution to do so;—the disclosure now, however, becomes unavoidable,

and with the deepest regret——” He paused.

“Speak on !” said Egbert, the paleness of death overspreading his cheek, “doubt not my firmness—I have been the pupil of adversity.”

“And doubt not,” cried Mr. Greville, “that the merciful Being, who extricated you out of your former troubles, will extricate you from your succeeding ones, if you still rely upon him—still continue, as formerly, to do your part.”

“Relieve my suspense,” said Egbert ; “I would rather feel the sword, than behold it suspended.”

“In one word then,” said Mr. Greville, “your fortune is gone !—The agent, entrusted with the final arrangement of the late Colonel Moreland’s
affairs,

affairs, has decamped with the sums received from the sale of his estates ; and it was my utter inability to give Jacintha such a portion as the altered state of your circumstances required, that prevented, and still prevents my consenting to your immediate union."

Egbert appeared thunderstruck for a moment ; then striking his forehead with a distracted air, he exclaimed—

"The evil destiny of my father pursues me, and my short experience of happiness but renders more dreadful the succeeding misery."

"Is this your vaunted firmness?" cried Mr. Greville.

"Can you wonder—can you reproach me," said Egbert, "for feeling acutely—for being even agonized by such a blow as this—a blow which strikes at

my dearest hopes—my long cherished expectations of felicity? Yet think not,” continued he, with increasing vehemence, after the pause of a minute, “think not that I now regret your intervention.—Alas! how little do we know what can render us happy! Had I accomplished my late wishes and intentions, every pang I now feel would have been doubled, at the idea of involving the woman I adore in calamity. Sooner than do so, I swear, before Heaven I swear, I would resign her for ever.—Yes, my Jacintha, to lose thee would not make me half so wretched, as to think I had rendered thee miserable.”

“Miserable!” inwardly repeated Jacintha, who, with rapture, would have shared his destiny, though assured

“That the bare earth

“Would be their resting-place, its roots their food,

“Some cleft their habitation.”

“Miserable!

“ Miserable !—Oh ! how impossible for thee to make me so, except it is by leaving me !”

“ The dreadful scenes of domestic misery I have beheld,” pursued Egbert, shuddering, as if with secret horror, at the retrospection, “ have made too deep an impression upon my heart, to permit me to indulge its tenderness at the expence of her I love.—We must part then, Jacintha—we must part,” he cried with uncontrollable emotion, as he felt her warm tears fall upon the trembling hand which clasped her’s to his heart, “ till a happier destiny prevails.”

“ Patience and fortitude,” cried Mr. Greville, “ not only alleviate, but overcome misfortunes ; and I doubt not their united efforts enabling you to surmount those which have befallen you.”

He then begged he would endeavour to compose himself, and listen calmly to some further particulars it was necessary for him to hear, relative to the late unfortunate event.

Egbert obeyed him to the utmost of his power ; and Mr. Greville proceeded to inform him that, very soon after the demise of Lady Oswald, he had received a letter from his (Egbert's) correspondent in London, acquainting him with the perfidious conduct of the agent, and entreating him to break it in the best manner he could possibly do.

“ I hesitated, however, to disclose it at that period,” continued Mr. Greville, “ not only from my unwillingness to add affliction to affliction, lest the burthen should become too heavy to be borne ; but from an idea which suddenly occurred, and which, upon communicating

municating to your friend, met his approbation : namely, to write to the Marquis of Methwold an explicit account of the unexpected reverse in your situation, and appeal to his humanity and justice to make you amends for the deficiencies, or rather cruelties of fortune."

" His humanity, his justice !" repeated Egbert indignantly, his faded colour reviving at the mention of his name ; " good Heavens ! these are virtues which he does not possess. Had he possessed the smallest particle of them, would he have suffered —— but—— I cannot dwell upon the dreadful subject," cried he, again turning pale, and faltering.

" I hoped," said Mr. Greville, " that his own sorrows had taught him to feel for the sorrows of another person ; for

the callous heart is frequently softened to compassion by such means."

"His sorrows!" repeated Egbert.

"Yes, I learned that he was under the heaviest affliction, in consequence of the languishing state into which his darling grandson, Lord Augustus Oswald, the heir apparent, as you know, of his titles and estates, had suddenly fallen; and flattered myself I could not have made the appeal I have mentioned at a more favourable juncture.

"But, unfortunately, ere I dispatched my letter, he had sailed with the invalid for Lisbon, whose premature death, if it should take place, makes you undisputed heir to the honours and fortunes of the Marquis; who I also hoped, from this consideration, exclusive of any other, would be induced to serve you. My letter was forwarded to
Lisbon;

Lisbon ; but, as yet, I have received no answer to it."

"A convincing proof you never will," exclaimed Egbert, hastily.

"I own I am rather doubtful," said Mr. Greville ; "such a length of time has elapsed since I wrote ; especially as I have found means of learning that he has written several times to England since his departure ; and, through the same means, I have also heard that Lord Augustus is better.

"As soon as I began to doubt receiving an answer from the Marquis, I began to consider in what manner I should break the unpleasant intelligence with which I was charged to you. Day after day passed away without coming to any determination, to speak the truth ; I still invented, or found some excuse for deferring my intended communication

tion, from the unconquerable unwillingness I felt to interrupt your happiness."

Egbert at this instant felt the keenest remorse at the suspicions he had suffered to pervade his mind respecting Mr. Greville; nothing, perhaps, wounding a generous, a noble heart more severely than the idea of having done injustice, even in thought, to any person; and that he had done injustice to Mr. Greville, the circumstances he revealed, as well as the language he used, evidently proved.

"But a letter I yesterday received from your friend in town," proceeded Mr. Greville, "at length made me resolve not to postpone what I had to communicate beyond to-morrow, as I now saw clearly I should injure you by any longer delay; the purport of the letter being to inform me, that the
agent

agent had been traced from Jamaica to St. Domingo, and that it was the opinion of the person who gave this intelligence, if immediate steps were taken, by which he meant, if some active person went over directly, part, at least, of the embezzled property might be recovered. Your friend laid this opinion before the different legatees, but not one of them would undertake the cause in any manner whatever. He trusted, however, that you, about whom he professed himself greatly interested, would not feel a similar reluctance."

"Reluctance!" repeated Egbert, "good Heavens! I shall be all impatience till I embark.—I feel new life, new spirits, at the thoughts of recovering something from the wreck, and still being happy."

"Many, many bright years of felicity are before you, I trust," said Mr. Greville,

ville; "there is one consolation, one happiness, at all events, which must be your's—that which ever results from the consciousness of properly performing our part.

CHAP. II.

“ Now Heaven, I trust, hath joys in store

“ To crown thy constant breast.”

BY this time the chaise, destined at first for a very different journey, had arrived ; and, as the night was growing late, Mr. Greville, fearful of his wife's being uneasy at his long absence, hurried Egbert and Jacintha to it, following them himself ; Woodville particularly requesting to take his horse.

On their way to Wyefield, Mr. Greville accounted for his unexpected appearance at the inn, which was owing
to

to accident, and not to premeditated design, as they had at first imagined.

He had gone, early in the morning, to spend the day with a friend, who lived on the Holywell road ; on arriving at his house, he found him just preparing to set out, about some particular business, to a place near Chester. He asked Mr. Greville to accompany him thither, to which he made no objection, the day being delightfully fine, and the ride exceedingly pleasant. On their return, they stopped at an inn to refresh their horses ; and scarcely had Mr. Greville been seated in a little front parlour, ere, to his unutterable astonishment, he beheld Jacintha and her companions entering. For a moment he sat lost in thought, vainly trying to conjecture what could have brought them to such a place, at such an hour ; a sudden recollection then of the impetuous temper of Egbert, and the high displeasure he expressed

expressed at the delay of his nuptials, made him conceive the real cause; and he blessed the chance which had given him an opportunity of frustrating so rash a project—a project which, if accomplished, could only, in the present crisis of affairs, have been productive of sorrow and repentance.

Mrs. Greville and Gertrude, who, in the early part of the evening, had been at a party in the village, were all amazement (an amazement not intermingled with much concern for any one of them) at the long absence of Mr. Greville, Jacintha, and Egbert; and vainly enquired from the maid and the boys if they knew where the latter were gone.

Their surprise was infinitely increased on beholding the three return together, in a chaise and four. Mrs. Greville scarcely suffered them to enter the parlour, before she eagerly demanded the cause

cause of this strange, this mysterious circumstance. Mr. Greville, however, declined gratifying her curiosity till they were alone.

The agitation and distress so visible in Egbert's looks, whose spirits had again sunk at the idea of the long separation which would, in all probability, take place between him and Jacintha; and the still deeper melancholy that was impressed upon her countenance, immediately attracted the observation of Mrs. Greville, and gave rise to various surmises, which heightened her impatience to learn the particulars Mr. Greville had promised to communicate. When they were revealed, no language could fully express the joy they gave her.

To hear that Egbert, whom she detested ever since she had given up all hopes of gaining him for Gertrude—to hear that he was sunk, distressed,
and

and might eventually be deprived of every stay—to hear that all the pleasing prospects of Jacintha were destroyed, and find that she was again thrown entirely into her power, inspired her with a pleasure almost too exquisite to be concealed. Luckily, however, for her, she had to do with a person not more unsuspicious of deceit in her bosom, than unconscious of it in his own; and who therefore believed to be sincere the expressions of regret which she forced herself to utter.

“I see, my dear,” said Greville, completely imposed upon, “to have had the power of placing this amiable, this noble young man even in humble independence, would have afforded to you as much delight as it would have done to me; had such been the case, I should certainly have opposed his embarking in his present enterprise.”

“You

“ You do me justice indeed, my dear,” said Mrs. Greville ; “ I should have been very happy to have *had the power.*”

“ We must, we will hope,” cried Mr. Greville, “ still to see him and our poor Jacintha happy.”

“ To be sure, my dear,” replied Mrs. Greville, “ *as happy as I wish them to be.*”

The anguish which Jacintha restrained in the presence of her father and her lover, before whom the paleness of her cheek, and the trickling tears which bedewed it, alone evinced her feelings, she gave way to in the solitude of her chamber ; she there wept, even to agony, at the idea, not merely of (in all probability) her long separation from Egbert, but at the idea of the hazards, the numerous dangers he might encounter.

encounter. These apprehensions, however, she did not encourage—she endeavoured to exert her reason to conquer them; anticipations of evil she knew must inevitably increase her wretchedness, if indulged; besides, they could not avert what she dreaded—and she also considered that the ills she feared might never come to pass. Why, therefore, unnecessarily torment herself—why sharpen the sting of real sorrow, by yielding to the terrors of imagination? The same Almighty Providence, she reflected, presided alike in every place, and to its divine protection she devoutly recommended her Egbert.

She at once tried to struggle with her fears, and with her grief; but all her efforts to subdue, in any degree, the latter, were ineffectual. She still wept and trembled at the idea of the approaching separation, concealing, however, to the utmost of her power, the anguish she endured; but it could not

be hidden from the watchful eyes of Egbert: he discerned the conflicts of her mind—he saw what she suffered to save him from an additional pang; and, while his heart was flattered by this proof of her tenderness, it was also wrung by the knowledge of her affliction.

In the bustle of preparation, he strove to lose the agony of thought.—“In a short time,” cried he to himself, “in a short time, and we shall again be—re-united;—but in the interval, the little interval which intervenes, what may not happen? Ah! that is the reflection which maddens, which torments me!—I leave my Jacintha again exposed to the tyranny, the artifices of an inhuman mother;—should that tyranny be now too much for her gentle heart to bear—which will not easily, I know, forego the sorrow that pervades it on my account; and should

should I, at my return, find, instead of my love, her——”

He started, he groaned at the dreadful idea which obtruded itself upon his imagination, and looking up to heaven, he fervently prayed that he might never live to hear Jacintha was lost to him.

“ Mrs. Greville could not conceal from him, nor from Jacintha, the malignant joy she felt at their unhappiness ; neither could she forbear attempting to wound the proud heart of Egbert, by remitting those attentions with which she had before distinguished him ; but here her malice was impotent—Egbert felt it not, except when directed against Jacintha.

In the course of two days, every thing was prepared for his departure, accompanied by Woodville, who determined not to leave him until he had em-

barked ; a determination which gave great pleasure to Jacintha. He was to proceed from Wyefield to London, to receive final instructions for his future conduct, and from thence to Falmouth, to take his passage in a West India packet.

The evening previous to his departure, Mr. Greville invited him to a solitary walk ; he had many things to say to him, which he believed would be much better received and delivered if they were alone. He wished to know what course he had determined upon, or whether he had formed any plan for his future settlement in life, if his exertions to recover his fortune should prove unsuccessful.

Egbert, who had not suffered his thoughts, for a moment, to dwell upon the possibility of a disappointment,

now

now started, and turned pale at the idea of one being suggested.

“No,” cried he, with a degree of wildness, “I have thought of no course—I have formed no plan; to what purpose should I do either, without friends, without interest to assist me?”

Mr. Greville, deeply affected by these words, did all in his power to check the progress of despair; and as a proof that we should never give way to despondence, the blackest prospect often brightening when least expected, he lightly touched upon his own story in the following words, as they pursued their walk through some lonely meadows at a little distance from the village.

CHAP. III.

- " He various changes of the world had known,
" And strange vicissitudes of human fate ;
" Good after ill, and after pain, delight,
" Alternate, like the scenes of day and night,
" Since every man who lives, is born to die,
" And none can boast sincere felicity ;
" With equal mind, what happens let us bear ;
" Nor joy, nor grieve too much for things beyond our care ;
" Like pilgrims to the appointed place we tend ;
" The world's an inn, and death's the journey's end !"

DRYDEN.

" MY father," said Mr. Greville,
" was the youngest son of a respectable
family ; he was brought up in the mer-
cantile line, and, before my boyish days
were

were over, had realized a handsome fortune ; but the tenure of earthly enjoyments is uncertain—by the sudden failure of a foreign house, he was deprived of the fruits of his long industry. The unexpected misfortunes which fell upon him, were not half so severely regretted upon his own account, as upon the account of his family, consisting of me and one daughter.

“ At this distressing period, an old friend, the companion of his early days, and a man of considerable fortune and consequence, stepped forward to his assistance. Through his means, my father was enabled to arrange his affairs, and re-establish himself in business ; but in a very narrow and circumscribed line, particularly when compared with that which he had formerly been in.

“ In order to lighten his expences, his friend proposed taking me entirely
c 4 under

under his own care, and educating me for the Church; having it in his power to make a very ample provision for me in that line.

“ My father received this additional proof of his regard with the deepest gratitude; and, at the age of fourteen, I exchanged his protection for that of Sir Hugh Netley's, and accompanied him to his residence in Kent.

“ His Lady and one son, about my age, comprised his family. This son was the idol of his parents; not so much, perhaps, from being the only survivor of a numerous offspring, as from being the last hope of their ancient House—the person, by whose means their names and honours were to be transmitted to posterity, a consideration of deep importance to minds swayed by pride and vanity.

“ Their

“ Their excessive indulgence strengthened the violence of passions naturally impetuous; but their blind partiality rendered them incapable of perceiving the ill effects produced by this conduct.

“ I shared all the advantages which they gave this darling heir, in point of education, and was placed at the same University with him in Oxford; from whence, during the vacations, we generally returned to Kent. In the course of one of those visits, I had an opportunity of witnessing the unjust lengths to which the extravagant partiality of Netley’s parents could lead them, when either his reputation or tranquillity were in any manner affected.

“ In a little cottage, near the park-gate, there resided a widow who, reduced, by the unexpected death of her husband, from a state of comfort to

one bordering on penury, had, with an only daughter, taken refuge in this humble retreat, from

“ The cruel scorn

“ Which virtue, sunk to poverty, would meet

“ From giddy passion, and low-minded pride.”

“ Here they endeavoured to support themselves by their industry ; and their laudable efforts were greatly encouraged and aided by the kindness and humanity of some neighbouring families of distinction, who had known them in more prosperous days. The girl was extremely pretty, and, as Netley grew up, she attracted his attention, and he determined to leave no means untried to gain her ; persuading himself that the affluence in which he could place her, would be quite a sufficient restitution to her and her mother, for the loss of her innocence.

“ He

“ He soon found, however, that they were not of the same opinion ; and with difficulty could find an opportunity of speaking to her. But her mother could not always be at her side, and he surprised her one day in a wood ; he forced her to hear the most insulting offers, from which he proceeded to the most unbecoming actions ; all his eloquence being unavailing to win her to his wishes.

“ I was luckily passing near the spot at the time, and hearing the screams of a female, hastily darted to it.

“ Enraged at the scene I beheld, I not only tore her from his grasp, but reproached him, in the bitterest terms, for his base, unmanly conduct.

“ He replied to my reproaches with insolence ; he meanly spoke of the obligations I lay under to his family, and

c. 6

plainly.

plainly declared, on that account, he expected, he had a right to expect, the most implicit deference and submission from me.

“ I endeavoured to curb the indignation and resentment which he excited ; but when he raised his hand against me, I lost all forbearance, and falling upon him, I gave him that chastisement he merited : some accidental passengers separated us with difficulty, and we returned by different ways to the house. On reaching it, I hastened to my chamber, too much irritated to think of the unpleasant consequences which might result to me from my behaviour to young Netley.

“ Not so the poor widow ; she trembled at the idea of the evils I had, perhaps, drawn upon myself by my services to her daughter ; and her grateful heart instantly prompted her to wait
upon

upon Sir Hugh and Lady Netley, in order to try and avert what she dreaded, by giving a plain statement of what had happened.

“ To her extreme mortification, her narrative was received with the utmost coldness, and she was dismissed without having her suspense or anxiety in any degree lessened.

“ Her fears about me, however, proved fruitless. Sir Hugh and his Lady, from a suspicion of their son, in this one instance, not having acted correctly, did not chuse to manifest any displeasure against me for my conduct to him, lest, by doing so, they should render the affair more public; they contented themselves with wreaking their revenge upon the unfortunate widow, to the imprudence of whose daughter they ascribed and reported the indiscretion of their son was owing. They
withdrew

withdrew their protection entirely from her; and, as they bore a pretty general sway in the neighbourhood, their example was almost universally followed, and she soon found herself compelled to seek another habitation.

“ With floods of tears and bitter anguish she submitted to this necessity. A long residence in it had attached her to her little dwelling. I pitied her distress, and while I did all in my power to mitigate it, I vainly wished I could have sheltered her from the despotic tyranny of offended pride.

“ Netley, conscious of having used me ill, did not resist the efforts which were made to reconcile us.

“ I could not but perceive the errors of Netley met with the same pernicious indulgence from the private tutor, who attended us to Oxford, and who was recommended

mended to Sir Hugh by a noble family, whom he served in that capacity; that they did from his parents; but I was too young, too inexperienced, to discover the motives from whence this indulgence originated; or, that to it was owing the complete ascendancy which Barclay, by degrees, acquired over the mind of his pupil.

“ Though I did not perfectly esteem, I warmly admired him. Highly favoured by Nature, he had improved her gifts by the most studious attention, and a constant intercourse with elegant society, and was altogether one of the most accomplished and pleasing men I ever knew.

“ He sometimes made us shorten our visits in Kent, in order to accompany him to a little paternal seat he possessed in Norfolk;—a perfect Paradise in miniature: high woods sheltered the house at the rear;

rear ; before it flowed a spacious river ; on either side was a wilderness of sweets ; and vines, myrtles, and honeysuckles completely covered it. This delightful mansion, the interior of which corresponded with its exterior, was graced by an inhabitant worthy of such a dwelling—the niece of Barclay, the most lovely woman, without exception, I ever beheld : her manners, like those of her uncle, were fascinating ; nor were her accomplishments less brilliant, less seductive than his.

“ You may well believe such a creature could not fail of inspiring the liveliest admiration ;—I felt at once the power of her charms, but carefully concealed the impression they made upon me, from a conviction of her being attached to Netley. To my utter astonishment, however, he did not take the least pains to cultivate her regard ; on the contrary, he betrayed an utter indifference
to

to her attractions, to the regret and disappointment, I thought, of her uncle ; who, I could not help thinking, had some ambitious projects in his head when he introduced her to the notice of his pupil.

“ On being ordained, Sir Hugh appointed me his domestic chaplain, until the living he had promised me should become vacant, by the death of its old incumbent.

“ Soon after this event, Netley and I again accompanied Barclay to Norfolk. The alteration in the appearance of his niece struck me the moment I beheld her : all her florid bloom was gone, and a deep melancholy marked her countenance, which evidently proved her gaiety was counterfeit.

“ My heart dictated an enquiry (which prudence and propriety repelled),
into

into the cause of this extraordinary change.

“Two days after my arrival in Norfolk, Netley entered my chamber one morning, where I was reading, and congratulated me on my good fortune.

‘In what?’ said I, laying aside my book.

‘In making a conquest of so lovely a girl as Edith Barclay,’ replied he.

‘You jest,’ cried I; ‘if there be any conquest in the case, you certainly have the glory of making it.’

‘You are mistaken, I assure you,’ replied he, very gravely; ‘’tis for you the secret sigh of her soul has been breathed. Her uncle made the discovery this morning, and revealed it to me in confidence. All her languor, all her
her

her melancholy have been owing to what she believed was a hopeless passion for you, in consequence of the uniform coldness of your manner towards her.'

" I could no longer doubt his sincerity, and eagerly accounted for my coldness, by declaring the opinion I had conceived of her being attached to him.

' It was jealousy made you think so,' said he ; ' like love, it often blinds the judgment.'

" He then informed me my addresses would meet with the approbation of her uncle ; and promised, on our return to Kent, to have every thing arranged, in the most agreeable manner, for my immediate union.

" I thanked him, in the most grateful terms, for the interest he took in
my

my happiness ; not, however, without feeling somewhat surprised at receiving so unexpected a proof of his regard.

“ He led me to the feet of my blushing mistress, who heard my warm protestations of affection with a coldness and confusion which would have chilled all my hopes, but for the prior assurance I had received of her attachment ; by degrees, however, she became less reserved, and I thought myself one of the happiest of men. Short and delusive was my felicity : on the very night of this, as I imagined, auspicious day, I found, on retiring to my chamber, a sealed billet upon the table, directed to me. Surprised at so strange a circumstance, I hastily tore it open, and with increasing astonishment, not devoid of horror, read the following words, in a hand utterly unknown to me :—

“ Treachery

“ Treachery is on foot ;—on perusal of this, repair with caution to the reading-closet adjoining Miss Barclay’s dressing-room, and you will be thoroughly convinced that the writer of these lines has not deviated from *truth*.”

“ I shall pass over the feelings and suspicions which pervaded my soul, on the perusal of this note ; suffice it to say, I obeyed the anonymous advice it contained, without loss of time, and stationed myself in the closet, which was elegantly fitted up as a library, and opened into Miss Barclay’s dressing-room. I found the door of communication sufficiently open to let me see into the room, without being seen myself. It was now lit up, and in a few minutes Miss Barclay entered, followed, to my inexpressible astonishment, by Netley.

“ She

“ She threw herself upon a sofa, and reproached him with having made her the most miserable of women ; he replied to her reproaches with gentleness, declaring his conduct should not excite such bitter resentment, since it was owing not to his own inclination, but to his father’s.

“ In short, I soon found he had triumphed alike over her affections and her honour ; and that it was merely from a wish to save her reputation, as she was in a situation to betray her indiscretion, that she consented to accept my hand.

“ Solely devoted to his own gratifications, Netley could not be restrained by any regard for the uncle, from taking advantage of the innocence of the niece. He thought too, it was fair to entrap those who had attempted to entrap him ; for it was evident that

Barclay

Barclay had introduced him to his niece, for the express purpose of drawing him into a marriage with her; a measure, from which his proud and ambitious soul revolted, disdaining the idea of an union with any woman, who was not of illustrious birth.

“ The imprudence of Barclay gave him all the opportunities he could desire of effecting his designs—designs which he veiled under an appearance of indifference.

“ Thus did he turn against Barclay that art he had infused, in a great degree, into his mind, and foil him at his own weapons.

“ But unwilling to have a quarrel with him, as he found him necessary to his pleasure, he no sooner learned that there was a probability of his baseness being discovered by its consequences,
than

than he contrived the scheme you are already acquainted with, to prevent any thing disagreeable from happening to himself; pretty certain of its being successful, from the admiration I involuntarily betrayed for Miss Barclay; he accordingly prevailed on her to confess a partiality for me to her uncle, who, I have reason to believe, at that very moment, knew the contrary, and was well acquainted with the real state of the case, but thought it better to feign ignorance of what could not be remedied, nor even resented, without losing, in all probability, the patronage of a family, who, he yet hoped, would elevate him to the eminence he was ambitious of attaining.

“ I burst upon the guilty pair with an indignation which darted in lightning from my eyes. Miss Barclay shrieked and fainted, and Netley, wildly

wildly starting from his knees, hastily exclaimed—

‘Greville, you cannot pardon me!’

‘Pardon thee!’ I cried, with ineffable contempt; ‘wretch! canst thou pardon thyself?’

“I was quitting the room, when Miss Barclay, slowly reviving, implored me to pause for a moment. I hesitated and still drew nearer to the door, when suddenly rising, she tottered towards me, and falling at my feet, implored me to have pity on her, and not publish her disgrace.

‘I do not deserve your mercy—I do not deserve your compassion,’ she cried; ‘your generosity will therefore be greater in extending any to me. Should my uncle know what has happened, I shall be driven from his house with
VOL. II. D infamy

infamy and scorn, without having a friend, a home in the wide world to receive me !—What the consequences of such desertion must be, you may easily picture to yourself.—Oh ! doom me not, therefore, to more dreadful horrors than I already experience !—Be softened in my favour, by my solemn assurance of rejoicing, instead of regretting your escape from the snare spread for you !’

“ I told her she had nothing to apprehend from me, and abruptly retired ; fearing to continue any longer in the room with my perfidious friend, lest my indignation against him should burst into violence, that, on his father’s account, I wished to avoid.

“ I determined to take an eternal leave of Barclay’s house the next morning. Miss Barclay heard of my preparations for departing, and had a letter conveyed to me, the purport of which

was



was to remind me of my promise, and conjure me not to think of returning to Kent before Netley, lest my doing so should excite enquiries that might lead to the discovery she dreaded.

“ In a short answer I satisfied her on this head, informing her that I was going upon a little tour I had long meditated, and that she might depend on the faith I had pledged to her.

“ I departed, without beholding either her or Netley, and took a cold leave of Barclay.

“ I prolonged my tour to a fortnight, though my mind was too much disturbed to permit me to derive any great pleasure from it; I then turned homewards. Within a few miles of Sir Hugh's, I stopped to give some refreshment to my horse; I had scarcely entered the inn, when I was accosted by one of the Baronet's tenants, who coming

up to me, begged leave to shake me by the hand, and offer his congratulations on my at length obtaining the long promised living; an account of the old incumbent's death having reached Netley House the preceding evening.

“The idea of immediate independence re-animated my spirits; I rejoiced to think I should no longer be obliged to live under the roof with a man I abhorred; and speedily remounting my horse, I soon found myself at Sir Hugh's.

“The family were just sitting down to dinner; I entered the parlour without hesitation, and was eagerly approaching Sir Hugh, when I felt myself suddenly chilled and transfixed by the coldness and severity of his looks; in a peremptory tone he commanded the butler, who was about placing a chair
at

at the table for me, where I should have told you both Netley and Barclay were seated, to desist.

‘You have no longer, Sir,’ said he, directing his eyes sternly towards me, ‘a seat at my table;—and the only obligation you can confer upon me, or I can acknowledge from you, is that which will result from your withdrawing yourself from my house immediately.’

“I leave you to judge what my feelings were at these words. Pride, resentment, indignation raised a whirlwind in my soul, which shook my frame. I would have demanded—I would have insisted on knowing the cause directly of the indignity with which I was treated, as a common act of justice to myself, had not the swelling passions of my heart opposed my utterance, and compelled me to retire precipitately, lest I should afford a greater triumph

to Barclay and Netley than I had yet done.

“ I traversed my chamber in a state bordering on distraction ; nothing, perhaps, being more agonizing than to know we are traduced, without having the power of vindicating ourselves from the aspersions cast upon us : and such was my case. I saw I was vilified in the opinion of Sir Hugh ; but, as I was confident the falsehood which had ruined me, was fabricated by his son, I knew all appeals to his justice would be unavailing.

“ Netley, in short, detested me ever since I had discovered the perfidy he meditated against me, and was consequently determined to effect my destruction. So true is this remark—

“ Forgiveness to the injur'd does belong ;

“ But they ne'er pardon who have done the wrong.”

“ Ere

“ Ere I had regained any degree of composure, the butler, who had been an inhabitant of the house long before I entered it, came to me.

‘ Ah ! Sir,’ said he, ‘ I was grieved to witness the undeserved reception you met to-day ; but don’t despair—inno-
cence is, sooner or later, rewarded in this world as well as the next, and guilt punished.—Your enemies triumph now ; but, depend upon it, you will yet have the advantage of them.’

“ He then proceeded to tell me what indeed I was prepared to hear, from the behaviour of Sir Hugh ; namely, that, in despite of his solemn promise to me, he had bestowed the living upon Barclay.

‘ Artifice and falsehood,’ said he,
‘ have led my poor master astray ; for
D 4 he

he has an honest heart, and would willingly do no man injustice.'

" He confirmed all my suspicions of Netley's being the person who had injured me with Sir Hugh ; though what his allegations against me were, he could not tell.

" I received two letters from him, written by my father, and their contents completed my misfortunes :—the first informed me of his having failed again ; the second, of his being in a most languishing state of health, without any hope but what was derived from the prospect of my independence, and being able to support my sister, who, he had reason to think, would soon be deprived of his protection ; and concluded by mentioning the severe shock he had received from the cold manner in which Sir Hugh had replied to a letter acquainting him with his misfortunes.

tunes.—‘ He seemed to think,’ said my father, ‘ that I had expectations of again experiencing his generosity ;— Heaven knows, in encouraging such an idea, he did me the highest injustice, as I would rather perish than attempt to encroach upon my friend.’

“ I resolved to lose no time in going to my father ; though I grieved to think the little comfort, or rather the increased sorrow I should occasion him. I tried to cheer myself, however, by hoping I might find means of rendering myself serviceable to him.

“ Ere I departed I wrote to Sir Hugh, proudly declaring my innocence, and total unconsciousness of ever having done any thing to forfeit his friendship. I accused him of the highest injustice in having condemned me unheard ; and concluded by protesting, if I ever found the slanders which deprived me of his

good opinion, pursued me into the world, I should take such measures as the laws of my country would enable me to use, to clear my injured character, and punish my accusers by exposing them to the open contempt they merited.

“ On my arrival in London, whither I journied, as you may believe, with a heavy heart, I found my poor father in obscure lodgings, and almost in the last extremity. To have undeceived him at such a period as this, relative to my prospects, would have been the height of cruelty ; and I had the satisfaction of thinking he died in peace, at the idea he entertained of my happy situation and ability to serve my sister, whom he recommended in the most affecting and energetic manner to my care.

“ The

“ The poor girl almost sunk beneath the shock she received on hearing of my real circumstances, with which, after the demise of her father, I could not delay informing her. Unable to provide her a proper asylum myself, I exerted myself to procure her one in the house of a respectable and opulent family, with whom we were connected, and luckily succeeded. I now turned my thoughts to my own destination, but here indeed I was at a loss. 'Tis true, from my long residence in the house of Sir Hugh, I had formed many intimacies with people of high respectability and ample power to serve me; but to their befriending me, I was pretty confident the desertion of Sir Hugh would be an insurmountable obstacle, and therefore determined not to pain myself by making applications which I could scarcely hope would be availing; and here I involuntarily thought like Fielding—how cautious should the great

be in discarding their dependants, since, in doing so, they often deprive them of the favour and countenance of the world ; it being natural to suppose they must have merited this renunciation, or they would not have experienced it.

“ Unable to arrange any plan, being not more unwilling to apply to the connections of my father, than to those of Sir Hugh, most of them having sustained very considerable losses by his misfortunes, I wandered about in a most forlorn and melancholy manner. In the course of those wanderings, I chanced one day to behold my friend, the widow, in a little shop in the environs, of which she was the mistress ; her eyes encountered mine almost at the moment I beheld her, and she instantly beckoned me in. She expressed the utmost joy at seeing me ; but after her first transports were abated, she gazed

gazed at me in silence for a few minutes, and then exclaimed, in a mournful tone—

‘Alas! Sir, what a pity that he, who has been so good a friend to others, should prove so bad a one to himself!’

“I entreated an explanation of these words, and she did not hesitate to inform me, that she understood I had lost the protection of Sir Hugh through my own imprudence.

“In short, from the information I collected from this honest creature, which she received from the housekeeper at Netley House, who was a kind of confidant of Lady Netley’s, I was now enabled to develop the scheme which had been formed to ruin me. Netley, by a solemn promise of providing liberally for Miss Barclay and her infant, and screening her from public disgrace, prevailed

prevailed upon her to lay the guilt of her seduction at my door ; her uncle affected to credit this assertion, because it was his interest to do so, as Netley assured him he should take care to make his father withdraw his favour entirely from me, and endeavour to make him some reparation for the injury I had done him, by doing for him what he had formerly intended to do for me.— This was the point Barclay had long been labouring to accomplish ; and so it was accomplished, he cared little by what means.

“ Sir Hugh could not doubt the veracity of his son, and heard of my supposed enormity with horror ; my false accusers artfully advised him to forbear from any reproaches on the subject, and also from giving me any satisfaction as to the cause of my dismissal from his house, and the alteration in his conduct.

“ They

“ They also, in order to prevent any after repentance of Miss Barclay’s endangering their schemes, sent her to France, where, I learned, she died soon after the birth of her infant.

“ Acquainted with the nature of the crime alledged against me, I was now enabled to stand forward in my own defence ; but ere my vindictory letter reached Sir Hugh, he had paid the last debt to Nature. All hopes from this quarter being at an end, and my prospects more forlorn than ever, the good widow, who was the confidant of my distresses, and who now found I had been basely injured, interested herself so warmly in my behalf with a literary character of her acquaintance, of respectability in his line, that I was put into a way of deriving some little advantage from my abilities ; thus did she requite the little services I had formerly rendered her.—I became her lodger ;
and,

and, in her innocent society, often lost those melancholy thoughts which meditations on the future, and retrospections on the past, occasioned.

“ I had not been above two months in her house, when she was seized with a lingering disorder which terminated fatally. Her principal anxiety at this awful and melancholy period was about her daughter, who still continued with her, and whose youth, inexperience, and beauty made her mother tremble at the idea of the dangers to which she might, to which she would, in all probability, be exposed, when deprived of her protection.

“ A residence under the same roof with this young creature, her engaging attentions, and apparent amiableness, had created an interest, a tenderness for her in my heart, which nothing but the unpleasantness of my situation withheld

held me from divulging. One day, however, as the mother was dwelling upon the usual theme, I was unwarily led into a confession of my sentiments for her daughter, and the motives which had hitherto rendered me unwilling to reveal them.

“She heard me with surprise and delight, and explicitly declared that, were my situation still more unpleasant than it was, she should die happy if she left her child under my protection.

“You may believe I did not raise any obstacles to her wishes, nor did her daughter; and a few days before her death we were united.”

From the knowledge our readers have already acquired of Mrs. Greville, it is scarcely necessary to say that Mr. Greville was utterly ignorant of her real disposition.—Vain, arrogant, and ambitious,

bitious, she was continually forming schemes to raise herself to the summit she sighed to attain. Her mother, before whom she did not practise that deception she did before others, did all in her power to correct the propensities she regretted, and which were concealed with the most consummate art from the eye of casual observation ; but her endeavours to do so were ineffectual, and she shuddered to think of the ills to which they might ultimately lead ;—to the imprudence they more than once occasioned, were already to be attributed many sorrows.

She well knew that, to the manner in which her daughter had acted towards him, in hopes of making an honourable conquest, might in a great degree be imputed the libertine attempts of Netley, and the consequent resentment of his family ; and she gladly embraced the idea of uniting her to Greville,
in

in order to free herself from the apprehensions she entertained on her account.

To this union the young lady would scarcely have consented, in the present situation of his affairs, had she not flattered herself he would recover some of his former friends, and, by their means, be extricated from all his difficulties.

“The death of the worthy widow,” continued Mr. Greville, “was speedily followed by other misfortunes which, from being less expected, were more calculated to overwhelm us. I will not exhaust your patience by recapitulating what they were ; suffice it to say, I found myself nearly deprived of the means of subsistence, and so unavoidably involved, that I dreaded every moment the loss of liberty.

“Perhaps

“ Perhaps you cannot well picture a situation much more distressing or deplorable than was mine at this juncture : I not only found myself almost at the lowest ebb of fortune, but saw the woman, whom I tenderly loved, destitute of the comforts essentially necessary for her. Yet still I did not suffer myself to sink into despair ;—and my hope and confidence in Heaven were rewarded.

“ By means, not more unexpected than sudden, I was relieved from my embarrassments—a convincing proof that often

“ When Fortune means most good to men,

“ She looks upon them with a threatening eye.”

“ From that period I have led a tranquil and a happy life, unenvying, as unenvied by the great ; and with truth may say, without ever breathing a sigh at the narrowness of my fortunes, till I
felt

felt prevented by it from obeying the dictates of friendship.

“ But I not only hope, but believe, that the delay of your wishes will add to your happiness when they are completed ; for, trust me, felicity never is so thoroughly enjoyed, as when it has succeeded pain and disappointment.— But, my dear young friend, be not rash—be not too impetuous in the pursuit of those measures which you think may accomplish it.

“ Precipitancy more frequently retards, than forwards our designs.—I know you will excuse what I say, particularly when I assure you any advice I offer, is not dictated by an idea of superior understanding, but superior experience.

“ Young, undesigning, and ardent, you are now, for the first time, about
launching

launching into the world, your own uncontrouled master—into a world, where snares of the most destructive nature are continually spread for people of your temper, which it requires the utmost circumspection to avoid. On the counsels of your heart keep a continual watch ; in your disclosures be reserved ; confide not in professions, till you have some proof of the sincerity of those who utter them ; and, above all, let not brilliant talents allure you into society you know to be unworthy of your esteem ; for in admiring, we too often cease to condemn—and what we cease to condemn, it is not unnatural to suppose we may be led to copy.”

Egbert felt truly grateful for the solicitude Mr. Greville manifested for his welfare ; he acknowledged his advice was well applied to him, as he had an impetuosity in his temper, too apt to hurry him away, and prevent the proper
exercise

exercise of his judgment ; but, henceforth, he protested his determination of trying to restrain it, from a full conviction of the errors and unhappiness it might otherwise lead him into.

CHAP. IV.

“ There’s such sweet pain in parting,
“ That I could hang for ever on thy arms,
“ And look away my life into thy eyes !”

OTWAY.

THE shadows of evening were now descending fast. Greville and Egbert returned to the village : in their way thither, Greville gratified the curiosity of Egbert, by informing him that Barclay did not long enjoy the living he had obtained so basely ; and that Netley, neither improved by age nor by experience, still lived unhonoured, and would, in all probability, die unlamented.

He

He also told him that the person whose anonymous warning had saved him from the artifices of his false friend, was a servant who attended them both to College.

On a little verdant mount, at the extremity of Greville's garden, between two high and spreading trees, a rustic bench was placed, "o'er-canopied by luscious woodbine;" it commanded a view of the village, and an extensive and variegated prospect, too romantic for the eye of taste ever to be weary of viewing. In this retreat, which he had long dedicated to love, and friendship, Mr. Greville particularly delighted; here he loved to listen to the hummings of his bees, whose hives were ranged on either side; and here he cultivated the choicest flowers;—so that it like

“ Pomona’s arbour smil’d,
“ With flow’rets deck’d, and fragrant smells.”

It was here that Egbert found Jacintha waiting his return.

The lingering sunbeams were now dying away upon the summits of the distant mountains, and all was becoming a dreary scene, uncertain if beheld; when the moon rising from behind a thickly wooded hill, “ unveiled her peerless light,” and touched the surrounding prospects with a meekness of colouring, which softened and increased their beauties;—the various sounds which had fluctuated on the air by day, were now over; the flocks had ceased their bleatings; the village murmur was become faint and indistinct, and the song of the nightingale alone prevailed throughout the woods, whilst

“ The

“ The beetle, with his drowsy hum,
“ Rung the first watch of night ; and
“ ————— off, with careless wing,
“ Brush’d the dew from many a weeping flow’r.”

The softness and stillness of the scene were not, by any means, calculated to dispel the melancholy which had taken possession of the mind of Egbert and Jacintha ; on the contrary, they revived a thousand tender remembrances in their minds, which at once tortured and afflicted.

“ Oh Egbert !” exclaimed Jacintha, in reply to the arguments he used, at once to conceal his own dejection and try to lessen her’s ; “ Oh Egbert ! you will enjoy comparative happiness compared to me ;—new pursuits, new society cannot fail of subduing, or at least diverting your sadness ; but here, amidst scenes, among objects so fami-

liar to us both, how can I hope to conquer mine?"

"By the efforts of reason," said Egbert; "which must convince you of the little probability there is of a long separation between us."

"Oh! could I hope it would be a short one," cried Jacintha, "how lightened should I feel! But I dread your persevering in the enterprise you have undertaken, regardless of difficulties or dangers. I fear that, even if you recovered part of your property, you would still delay your return, in hopes of regaining the whole, however distant or uncertain the prospect of doing so appeared."

Egbert assured her this apprehension was groundless; and that it was his fixed determination, if he beheld little likelihood of his exertions being crowned
with

with success, to return to Europe immediately, in order to try and devote them to some better purpose.

A long and interesting conversation now took place, in the course of which, Egbert mentioned some ideas which had been suggested by her father and himself relative to his future destination, in case he found it impossible to recover what was lost. Several matters too, which neither he nor Jacintha had before spoken of, from an unwillingness to touch upon the moment of departure, were now finally arranged. Egbert made Jacintha solemnly promise to inform him of every thing which happened to her during his absence; and she, in her turn, insisted upon his being equally unreserved in his communications.

Most reluctantly they rose to obey a summons to supper. Ere they returned

to the house, Jacintha made Egbert pause to observe a group of villagers, who had just assembled, as was frequently their custom, upon a little "moonlight glade" adjacent to the inn, to dance to the simple music of the harp: the loud shouts of laughter, which resounded on every side, proved that the feelings of their hearts were in perfect unison with the lively strains to which they kept time.

"Here, Egbert," said Jacintha, who still feared that, notwithstanding all his protestations to the contrary, he might be induced, by the ardent desire she knew he felt, of placing her in a situation more elevated than she had hitherto been in, to prolong his stay in the West Indies, if there was the least chance, however remote, of recovering his fortune; "here, Egbert," said she, pressing her hand upon his arm, "is a convincing proof that wealth is not absolutely

lutely essential to felicity. Can imagination picture to itself, in any station, greater happiness than is experienced by these rustics? and yet they are not more ignorant of luxuries, than destitute of the means of obtaining them.

“Of the shortness of life you yourself have spoken; waste not, therefore, its fleeting moments in toiling after riches, which we see may be done without; and which, perhaps, instead of adding to its enjoyments, might mar them: for too often, I believe, our wishes increase in proportion to our supposed power of gratifying them, till at length they become uncontrollable, and consequently tormenting.”

“Oh my Jacintha!” cried Egbert, who perfectly comprehended the meaning of this speech, gazing upon her pale face, now “combating ’tween smiles and tears,” and clasping her to his
E 4 bosom

bosom as he spoke, "canst thou, not less lovely than beloved, imagine I would waste moments, which might be devoted to thee, in idle pursuits; or delay, an instant longer than is necessary, a return which, I trust, will put me in possession of my most ardent wishes?"

A second summons now obliged them to hasten to the house. They found Woodville and his sister in the parlour; a heavy cloud hung upon every brow except upon Mrs. Greville's and Gertrude's, which no efforts could dissipate; and, at an early hour, the little party broke up.

Egbert had been advised, both by Mr. Greville and Woodville; to avoid taking any particular leave of Jácirtha, which, they assured him, could only be productive of pain; he accordingly promised, though with infinite reluctance, to

to set off in the morning, without seeing her.

But when they were about separating for the night, his emotions nearly betrayed this intention. He seized her hands as she was quitting the room, and pressing them with the most passionate fondness to his lips and bosom, imperfectly articulated something like a farewell. A significant glance from Mr. Greville suddenly restored him to recollection, and he immediately permitted her to retire; still persuaded that he did not mean to depart till after breakfast the next morning.

By the first glimpse of day Egbert stole from his chamber, where he had passed a sleepless night, and quitted the house without meeting any of the family, having previously taken a most affectionate leave of Mr. Greville.

Punctual to the hour, he saw Woodville approaching at the instant he left the house, and they proceeded together to the bridge, where, as had been settled, they found the groom with their horses.

Here Egbert involuntarily paused, and looked back ; he seemed to want resolution to tear himself from a place, which contained all that was dear to him in life. Something like a gloomy presentiment of ill pervaded his mind, which he condemned himself for weakness in indulging, yet had not power to shake off ; once more he wished to have folded Jacintha to his heart—once more he wished to have heard her repeat assurances of eternal constancy and truth, almost persuading himself he should not have felt so unhappy if he had taken that leave his heart dictated.

The

The melancholy appearance of every thing at this early hour, contributed not a little to increase his dejection : the shadows of night were as yet but imperfectly withdrawn ; no spiral smoke, ascending from amidst the tufted trees, which embosomed the cottages on the green, proclaimed the rising of the children of industry and labour ; a few straggling sheep, nibbling the wet grass, were the only animate objects to be seen.

“ This dreary prospect resembles mine at present,” thought Egbert ; “ but the resemblance will not long continue ;— a bright and glorious sun will soon dispel the gloominess of this ; but days, nay months must elapse ere I can hope for any change in mine !”

“ Come, Oswald,” cried Woodville who began to suspect he meant to delay his departure till he had seen Jacintha,

and who wished to prevent an interview which could not fail, he was sure, of causing additional pain to both; "the morning air is cold and damp; we shall be quite chilled if we stand here any longer."

Egbert laid his hand upon his horse, as if going to mount; then again pausing, he once more directed his eyes towards Jacintha's window.

"Farewel, my love!" he inwardly exclaimed, "may peace, may health, may happiness be thine!—and may we meet, even sooner than we expect, to part no more!"

Then vaulting into the saddle, he instantly rode off, and soon lost sight of Wyefield and its environs.

CHAP. V.

- “ When thy lov'd sight shall bless my eyes again
“ Then will I own, I ought not to complain,
“ Since that sweet hour is worth whole years of pain.”

JACINTHA was deeply affected when she found Egbert had departed without seeing her ; but, as soon as she had somewhat recovered from the shock the intelligence gave her, the arguments of her father in some degree reconciled her to his having acted in this manner, by convincing her that contrary conduct would only have been productive of additional pain to both.

She

She now exerted herself to bear with patience a separation that could not be avoided, and encouraged, as much as possible, hopes of its being a short one.

Egbert, according to his promise, was punctual in writing to her during his continuance in England; his last letter, written the very hour he was about embarking, was brought to her by Woodville, after an absence of a fortnight, and contained the most fervent declarations of affection, and solemn assurances of expediting as much as possible his return.

About a week after he had sailed, Mr. Greville was agreeably surprised by receiving a letter from his sister, Mrs. Decourcy, who had been absent many years in the East Indies, informing him that she and Mr. Decourcy were arrived in England, and proposed paying him an almost immediate visit.

These

These tidings gave sincere pleasure to Mr. Greville; their long separation not having diminished the tender affection he felt for his sister, whom he had despaired of ever seeing again.

They also diffused a general joy throughout his family. Jacintha was truly pleased at the idea of being introduced to a relation, of whom she had heard so amiable, so interesting a character; and Mrs. Grèville and Gertrude were delighted to think of the consequence they should derive from the approaching visit; not doubting that it would give their neighbours an opportunity of judging, in some degree, of the immense wealth of Mr. Decourcy; nor were they less charmed at the thoughts of the handsome presents, which, from former acts of generosity, they had every reason to believe they should receive on the present occasion.

These agreeable hopes and expectations almost obliterated the grief which Gertrude felt for the departure of Captain Bellamy ; who, with Lord Gwytherin, and all his Lordship's visitors, had quitted the Park in the middle of the week, and who, during his continuance there, had contrived to make a deep impression upon her heart ; from which, however, he was prevented deriving any advantage, not more by the circumspection of her father than the vigilance of her mother, whom pride rendered prudent, and who perceiving his designs, took care to guard against them ; but though all hopes of obtaining the victory he had meditated were over, he did not depart without taking a very tender leave of Gertrude, protesting he meant to have married her privately, and

“ That if Jove had set him in the place of Atlas,

“ And laid the weight of Heav'n and Gods upon him,”

he

he could not have been more oppressed than he was at the idea of parting from her.

A few days after he had the pleasure of hearing from her, Mr. Greenville had the superior pleasure of embracing his sister. Though the bloom of youth was over, the elegance of her person, the regularity of her features, the sweetness and animation of her countenance still rendered Mrs. Decourcy a most attractive object ; nor were her manners less calculated to please and captivate, than her appearance : frank, cheerful, and obliging, they evinced her disposition to be candid, generous, and humane.

The figure and deportment of Mr. Decourcy were commanding ; his understanding was strong, and highly cultivated, and he was neither destitute of sensibility nor benevolence ; but there
was

be attained in this state: that which she experienced on the present occasion, was considerably lessened by the departure of the fashionable folks from the Castle, without even knowing of her connection to people of such fortune and consequence as her present visitors. There was also another, and a still more poignant cause for regret and mortification: Mrs. Decourcy shewed a decided preference for Jacintha, which not all the artful insinuations of this, her supposed mother, could prevent.

Mrs. Decourcy knew her sister-in-law too well to be biassed by her; though she was too amiable, and too sincerely attached to her brother to attempt communicating, or even hinting to him the opinion she entertained of his wife.— Ignorance, in some respects, she believed essential to happiness.

The

The heart of Jacintha glowed with gratitude for her attentions ; they gave her the most exquisite pleasure, not from any idea of the triumph they afforded her over her mother and sister, but from the pride, the delight she felt at being thought worthy of the regard, the particular notice of a person she herself so highly esteemed and admired.

Mrs. Greville exerted all her talents to entertain her guests, who, by their manner, gave her reason to believe she had not exerted herself in vain. It was evident, however, that their principal gratification, in regard to amusement, was derived from excursions about the neighbourhood, and particularly into Wales. In these excursions they were accompanied by Woodville and his sister, who, I have already said, were related to Mr. Decourcy, and very graciously

graciously received by him, on his arrival at Wyefield.

At the expiration of a month they talked of departing. Jacintha heard them with regret; she was now too much attached to Mrs. Decourcy to think of a separation without sorrow; besides, she felt that in losing her society, she should lose a charm which had diverted the sadness that oppressed her heart ever since Egbert quitted Wyefield, notwithstanding all her efforts to conquer it,

She was also perfectly aware that the presence of Mrs. Decourcy was her only shield against the persecutions of her mother and sister, who, she clearly perceived, were irritated to the highest pitch of malignancy against her, in consequence of the partiality Mrs. Decourcy had manifested for her.

These

These painful reflections and apprehensions completely vanquished, the cheerfulness she had forced herself to assume; spiritless and sad, her countenance denoted the dejection of her mind. How agreeably, how delightfully was this dejection dispelled by an invitation from Mrs. Decourcy to accompany her to town, and reside with her till her union with Egbert (of whom Mr. Greville had fully spoken to his sister) should take place. Mr. Decourcy seconded it with as much warmth as he generally displayed; and Mr. Greville, who appeared infinitely more pleased than surprised, instantly granted Jacintha permission to accept it.

To give an adequate idea of Mrs. Greville's feelings upon this occasion is utterly impossible; the rage she felt at Jacintha's being the object of attraction both to Egbert and Lord Gwytherin, was faint compared to that she now experienced

experienced at her being taken under the protection of Mrs. Decourcy.

The agitation of her mind was discernible in her countenance; but, though she trembled with passion and resentment, she was prevented by selfish motives from giving either utterance. But the restraint she imposed upon herself before Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy, she made herself ample amends for when alone with her husband; the dissimulation she had so long practised then gave way, and her envy and jealousy relative to Jacintha were openly manifested.

“She has entered my family,” she exclaimed, scarcely articulate from passion, “to be the bane of all my hopes and expectations. Only for her artifices, I am sure Gertrude would have been preferred to her by Mrs. Decourcy.—But she shall not enjoy her protection—no, Mr. Greville, she shall not triumph

triumph over my daughter.—I will inform your sister she is no connection of our's;—common justice must then induce her to change her intentions in favour of Gertrude.”

“ You err in thinking so,” said Mr. Greville; “ Justice, if she attends to it, must influence her to persevere in any kind intentions she may have formed for Jacintha.”

“ My suspicions then,” cried Mrs. Greville, with eagerness, “ are well founded.”

“ No,” replied Mr. Greville, in a calm and rather solemn voice, “ they are not.—I know the nature of your suspicions—I know, from former hints, you doubt my innocence respecting Miss Barclay, and believe Jacintha to be her child and mine. A perfect knowledge of my disposition had long

since, I hoped, triumphed over these unjust suspicions.—I cannot express the grief I feel at finding myself disappointed.—Many men, in a similar situation, might yield to resentment ; but I can only regret not being sufficiently happy to obtain the esteem of my wife, after an union of so many years.”

“ You wrong me,” said Mrs. Greville, who began to fear she had seriously offended him ; and as she knew, his displeasure was not easily provoked, so neither was it easily allayed.

“ No,” cried Mr. Greville, “ I do not wrong you ;—for how is it possible you can esteem the man whose veracity you doubt ?—Nay more, how is it possible you can bring up your children to respect a father, whose integrity you yourself suspect ?”

“ Dear

“Dear me,” said Mrs. Greville, bursting into tears, “how cruel to speak in such a manner! I am sure it was in consequence of what you yourself said, that I dropped the unfortunate hint, which seems to have offended you so much. It was natural to suppose there must be some connection between you and Jacintha, else why should she have a claim upon the kindness of Mrs. Decourcy, which your words certainly implied she had?”

“Rest satisfied,” said Mr. Greville, “with hearing me again most solemnly protest, Jacintha is in no way related to me or mine.”

“Why then speak in such a manner?” asked Mrs. Greville; her apprehensions of his displeasure yielding to her curiosity.

“ I cannot answer the enquiry,” replied Mr. Greville; “ I therefore request you may not repeat it.”

“ Very well, Sir,” answered Mrs. Greville; “ but I am sure, if you complain of not obtaining my esteem, I have an equal right to complain of not obtaining your confidence; by this time, I think I might have been thought worthy of learning the secret relative to Jacinta’s birth.”

“ Nothing could excuse my divulging it,” said Mr. Greville, “ after the solemn promise I made to keep it; and except the restrictions laid upon me to preserve it, should be withdrawn, of which there is very little probability, it must descend with me to the grave.

“ But come, my dear,” continued he, taking her hand, and evidently wishing to change the subject, “ compose

pose yourself;—let not envy and jealousy disturb the tranquillity of your bosom—they are malignant guests, not more destructive to the virtue and generosity, than to the peace of those who harbour them.—Jacintha is an amiable girl, deserving of the kindness of my sister; which, I am convinced, she has acquired merely from the innocent attractions of her manner.”

Much more he said to convince her, that as Mrs. Decourcy regarded Jacintha for her own merit, she would not be induced to forego any intentions she had formed in her favour, by learning she was not their offspring.

Mrs. Greville, though no philosopher, after a little consideration, thought it expedient to submit with calmness to what was inevitable; the storm consequently blew over without doing any mischief.

Two days after the above conversation, Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy, accompanied by Jacintha, departed for London; as also did Miss Woodville and her brother, so that a very pleasant travelling party was formed.

As the hour of separation approached, the tenderness of Jacintha's heart completely overcame the involuntary resentment her mother and sister's injurious conduct towards her had excited, and she would have taken a most affectionate leave of them, had not the repulsive coldness of their manner prevented her.

Greville, as if to make amends for that coldness, pressed her to his bosom with the warmest tenderness, and bestowed a fervent blessing on her. Notwithstanding the joy she felt at being delivered from the capricious tyranny of her mother, she could not quit a place where she had lived so long—a
place

place endeared to her by the remembrance of the happy hours spent in it with her beloved Egbert, without an emotion of regret, which filled her eyes with tears. The kind attentions and pleasant conversation of her companions, however, soon subdued her painful emotions.

The third morning from the commencement of their journey, the travellers were set down at Mr. Decourcy's lodgings in Piccadilly, the house he had taken in St. James's Square not being yet ready for his reception.

From hence Mr. Woodville and his sister proceeded to Mortlake, where their aunt, Mrs. Derwent, resided, at whose house Woodville had promised to pass the ensuing winter.

CHAP. VI.

“ Now cold despair

“ To livid paleness turns the glowing red.”

MRS. DERWENT, the half-sister of Mr. Decourcy, was by no means pleased to hear that a relation of Mrs. Decourcy's was in future to reside under his roof; it was a circumstance that made her apprehensive he felt a preference for her family, which might prove highly detrimental to the interests of his own; a consideration that gave her extreme uneasiness, as her niece, Miss Woodville, the only being on earth whom she really regarded, required an addition

addition to her fortune, which she had not the power of making to it, though her jointure was considerable, as an ungovernable passion for shew and expence induced her to live up to the full amount of it.

She was too great an adept, however, in the arts of dissimulation, to discover the jealous eye with which she looked upon Jacintha; nor in any instance did she betray a deficiency of esteem and affection for Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy.

Miss Woodville appeared *equally* fervent in her regard; whether it was more sincere, is a point hereafter to be ascertained.

Woodville, who never spoke but as he thought, who never professed what he did not feel, unlike his aunt and sister, could not avoid making a distinction in the attentions he paid to

Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy ; the former he coldly esteemed, the latter he warmly admired.

This distinction either was not noticed by Mr. Decourcy, or purposely overlooked by him, in consequence of his ardent affection for his wife, whose merit he allowed to infinitely exceed his own, and whom he therefore deemed entitled to superior homage.

Though this was neither a gay nor a fashionable time of the year to be in London, there was sufficient in the novelty of every thing about her to afford amusement to Jacintha, who could scarcely be persuaded that they did not mean to impose upon her simplicity, when they told her (perhaps at the very moment she was preparing for a round of entertainments, or almost felt her head giddy, from the crowds which had been passing and repassing, during the
day,

day, before the windows) that the town was quite dull and deserted at present.

After a residence of three weeks in the metropolis, during which she saw every thing worthy of notice, or that could entertain her, she accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy into Hertfordshire, whither they went to visit a seat which was advertised for sale.

They took up their quarters in Hertford, the seat being situated near that town; they found it perfectly agreeing with the description given of it—a description which had pleased them highly. Mr. Decourcy therefore did not long deliberate about becoming the purchaser; and, as the house was ready for the immediate reception of his family, he soon took possession of it.

Highly as Jacintha had been amused in London, she was not sorry to find

herself again in the country;—habit and disposition had attached her to it, for in rural scenes there is a soothing tranquillity, which cannot fail of pleasing a mind of sensibility.

Mr. Decourcy's new mansion was a noble structure, superbly furnished, and surrounded by extensive pleasure-grounds, beautifully laid out, and watered by a branch of the river Lea.—The landscapes Jacintha had been accustomed to contemplate, had more of awful grandeur in them than those she now beheld; but pastoral beauty here amply made up for the want of sublimity.

The rich and mellow tints of autumn were now diffused over the woods, the fields stood thick with corn, the harvest horn sounded in every direction, and the whole country presented scenes of
joyous.

joyous industry truly delightful to the benevolent heart.

The Decourcys were visited by all the respectable families in their neighbourhood, and a very pleasant society was soon established; their time therefore glided away most agreeably in visiting, making excursions about the country, and projecting improvements in their new domain.

But no amusement, no avocation, could render them, particularly Mrs. Decourcy, forgetful of the claims of poverty, or the obligations laid upon her by the bounty of Providence to benefit others; her charities, however, were without parade or ostentation; like the fostering dews of heaven, they were distributed in silence and secrecy to those they nourished.

Jacintha's

Jacintha's esteem and affection for her daily increased ; for scarcely a day passed in which she had not some new cause for admiration and gratitude. But the regard she felt for Mr. Decourcy, bore no proportion to that she felt for Mrs. Decourcy ; neither time nor intimacy subdued the reserve of his manner—a reserve which chilled all the warm, the glowing feelings, the real kindness of his actions were calculated to inspire.

The latter end of autumn, the Woodvilles, accompanied by Mrs. Derwent, paid a visit to Beech Grove, the seat of Mr. Decourcy. Three months had now elapsed since the departure of Egbert, and Jacintha was becoming not only anxious, but impatient to hear some tidings of him ; the uneasiness occasioned by this anxiety and impatience, was happily relieved, ere Woodville left the country, by a packet from her father,
enclosing

enclosing letters from Egbert to her and Woodville, the purport of which were to inform them of his safe arrival in Jamaica; his having there received such particulars as he required to know relative to the agent, and the pleasing prospect he beheld of being able to recover at least part of his property, and return to England sooner than he at first imagined he could have done. He desired these letters might be answered immediately, though at the same time he hinted the probability there was of his not receiving them directly on their reaching the place of destination; as the business he was engaged in, would most likely oblige him to change continually.

Jacintha obeyed his request with transport; she gave him a faithful narrative, according to her promise, of all that had happened to her since his departure, and fully expatiated on the happiness

happiness of her present situation, from a conviction of the pleasure she should impart to him by doing so.

But the delightful tranquillity diffused over her mind by his letter, was soon interrupted by the illness of Mrs. Decourcy. Two days after her visitors had left her, she was confined to her bed. Jacintha now became her constant attendant, and, by her tenderness and assiduity, amply repaid the kindness she had experienced from her.

Mr. Decourcy, not more alarmed than distressed by the illness of his wife, was truly sensible of any attentions that had a chance of mitigating it, and expressed high obligations to Jacintha for her conduct; who shrunk from receiving acknowledgments, which her gratitude could not permit her to think herself entitled to.

Mrs.

Mrs. Decourcy continued a week in extreme danger; at the expiration of that period the disorder came to a crisis, and a visible change then took place for the better.

She had just fallen asleep one morning, and Jacintha was reading by the bed-side, when a servant softly opened the door, and beckoned her from the room.

“My master wishes to speak to you directly, in the parlour, Miss,” said the maid.

Jacintha immediately descended to it, and was seized with a sudden panic the moment she entered it, in consequence of the discomposure of Mr. Decourcy’s countenance, which she could not possibly account for; having left him but a few minutes before, rejoicing at the favourable report which the physician

sician had made that morning of Mrs. Decourcy.

“ I hope you have not heard any unpleasant tidings, Sir,” said she, tremblingly approaching him.

He motioned for her to take a seat, and looking from her to the table on which he leaned, appeared at a loss how to answer.

The idea of Egbert was ever uppermost in the mind of Jacintha ; and perceiving a newspaper upon the table, it instantly occurred to her that it contained some dreadful tidings from the West Indies, in which he was mentioned as a sufferer. No sooner had this thought suggested itself, than without giving herself time to reflect how very improbable it was that, had such been the case, Mr. Decourcy, in the present situation of his family, would have permitted

mitted her to obtain a knowledge of it, she started wildly from her chair, and caught up the paper.

“What is the matter?” exclaimed Mr. Decourcy, rising, and evidently alarmed by her manner.

“Oh! tell me,” cried she, almost breathless with terror, “has any thing happened to him?”

“To whom?” asked Mr. Decourcy.

“To Egbert—to Mr. Oswald,” replied she.

“Nothing that I know of.—But, my dear Jacintha,” continued Mr. Decourcy, with something like reproach in his voice and countenance, “is Mr. Oswald your only friend?—You have relations—you have parents—a tender, an indulgent father.”

“Ah!”

“ Ah !” cried Jacintha, starting, and clasping her hands together, “ what of my dear father ?”

Mr. Decourcy put a letter into her hand, which he said he had received but a few minutes before ; and Jacintha read as follows :

“ TO GEORGE DECOURCY, ESQ.

“ Wyefield, Nov. —

“ SIR,

“ It is with extreme concern I break in upon your domestic happiness, with the distressing intelligence of your worthy brother-in-law’s illness ; but the alarming state which he is now in, very little hopes being entertained of his recovery, renders it necessary to apprise his friends of his danger.—You can better imagine than I describe the anguish of his wife and children, at the near prospect they behold of losing the most tender of husbands and of fathers.

“ Their

“ Their neighbours sincerely sympathize in their grief, for his virtues have rendered him universally beloved ;—but, alas ! common sympathy can do little towards alleviating affliction like their’s. If you, Sir, and your amiable lady, could make it convenient to come down to Wyefield, your presence, I am confident, would do more than any thing else could do, to support and console the unhappy family.—With respectful compliments to the ladies,

“ I remain, Sir,

“ Your obedient and very

“ Humble servant,

“ J. JONES.”

“ This is no time for the indulgence of grief,” said Mr. Decourcy, on seeing Jacintha weeping in an agony over the letter ; “ exertion is requisite.—At all times, the best proof we can give of
our

our regard for those we love, is by making efforts to serve them. You must set out directly for Wyefield; and be assured nothing but the situation of your aunt, should prevent me from accompanying you thither."

He said he would himself break the melancholy tidings of her father's illness to Mrs. Decourcy, whom he declared he could not permit her to see before her departure, lest her emotions should agitate her. He desired her to be expeditious in preparing for her journey, in which he said his housekeeper should accompany her.

Jacintha hastened to her chamber, and soon exchanged her present dress for a travelling one. Mr. Decourcy presented her with a pocket-book, containing Bank notes to a pretty considerable amount; and charged either her or the housekeeper to write immediately
5 upon

upon their arrival at Wyefield; promising, in his turn, not to delay acquainting Jacintha with every thing she could desire to know respecting her aunt.

They proceeded to St. Albans in Mr. Decourcy's chaise, and pursued the remainder of their journey in hired carriages.

It was now the gloomy month of November, and every thing seemed changed since Jacintha had, a few short months before, travelled the same road; but the alteration in the appearance of Nature was not greater than was the difference between her feelings now and at that period; and never, perhaps, had she been so thoroughly convinced of the mutability of earthly happiness, as at the present moment.

They

They travelled with such expedition that, on the second night of their journey, they reached Wyefield. The heart of Jacintha beat with redoubled violence when, from the summit of a hill, she beheld the faint glimmering of the village lights, and reflected that, in a few minutes, her dreadful apprehensions would either be confirmed or removed. Trembling and agitated, she leaned for a minute against the garden-gate, on alighting from the chaise, in order to try and recover a little composure ere she entered the house, to which her eyes were eagerly directed.

Darkness and silence seemed to reign within it, nor did the external scene appear less dismal and dreary. The night was dull and dark; the heavy clouds rested on the distant hills; no trembling star, no moon looked from the sky; the wind was up in the wood, and whistled through its leafless branches; the

the stream of the valley murmured as if impeded in its course; and from the tree at the grave of the dead, the long-howling owl was heard.—Shivering and sad, Jacintha approached the door, and knocking softly at it, was almost immediately admitted by Gillian.

CHAP. VII.

“ Death ends our woes,
“ And the kind grave shuts up the mournful scene.”

DRYDEN.

THE looks of Gillian were not expressive of any surprise at beholding Jacintha; instead, however, of answering her eager though faltering enquiries, she continued at the door.

“ For whom are you looking?” said Jacintha, perceiving she did not close it.

“ Why, lauk a mercy, for Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy, sure!”

“ They

“ They have not come to Wyefield,” said Jacintha.

“ Dear a me, how sorry I be to hear so!—it will be grievous tidings for my poor Missus,” continued Gillian, gently shutting the door, and leading the way into the parlour, which was dreary and deserted, though a decaying fire still glimmered within it.

“ Tell me of my father !” exclaimed Jacintha.

Gillian laid down the candle, and raised her apron to her eyes.

“ Tell me, tell me,” cried Jacintha, “ if what I fear has come to pass?”

Gillian shook her head, and turned away.

The melancholy truth now burst upon Jacintha; her heart sunk beneath the shock it gave her, and she would have fallen to the ground, had not the house-keeper caught her in her arms; by the aid of restoratives, which the affrighted Gillian hastily procured, her senses were gradually restored. The house-keeper then exerted all the eloquence she was mistress of, to try and reconcile her to the event which had taken place; but the common-place arguments she made use of, had no effect upon Jacintha. She wept in agony, and her affliction for her father was, if possible, increased by her having arrived too late to receive his last blessing.

“Lauk a mercy, Miss,” said Gillian, on hearing her express this regret, “I am sure you should be glad, instead of sorry, that you were not here;—it was the most melancholiest thing in the world to see the poor dear soul a dying. To be sure,

sure, if ever there was a saint upon earth, he was one :—he was so quiet, so good-natured through all his sickness, though he knew he could never recover.”

“ Oh, my dearest father !” cried Jacintha, as she cast her eyes around the room, which revived in her remembrance a thousand tender recollections of his goodness and indulgence to her, “ why was I not with you ?—Had I entertained the smallest apprehension of what has now happened, nothing should have tempted me hence.—Oh ! little did I imagine, when in this room, this very spot, you bade me farewell, and blessed me, that it was a last farewell—a last blessing I was receiving !”

She asked when he died, and was informed on the preceding day.—She enquired in the tenderest manner about her mother and Gertrude, who, judging from her own feelings, she

concluded to be under the heaviest affliction, and for whom she felt a sympathy that revived all the affection she had once borne them, and only ceased to experience in consequence of their unkindness.

Gillian informed her they were indeed in very great sorrow; and that, worn out by fatigue, as were also all the rest of the family, they had retired to their chamber at a very early hour.

The housekeeper now urged Jacintha not to delay any longer endeavouring to obtain some rest, and offered to pass the night with her; an offer which Jacintha accepted, and they were conducted to a chamber, which, as it had been prepared for Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy, was extremely comfortable.

Jacintha's mind was too much disturbed and distressed to permit her to sleep;

sleep ; she spent the night in tears ; and rising at the first glimpse of day, stole from the chamber, without being observed by her companion, to visit the remains of her father.

With a trembling hand she opened the door of the room in which they were deposited—with still greater emotion she approached the bed upon which they were laid ;—she shuddered, and involuntarily shrank back, as her eyes first fell upon them ; then again drawing near the bed, she gazed upon the pale countenance of him she had supposed her father :—neither sickness nor death had deprived it of its benignancy ; but for the hollow eyes, the colourless lips, it might have been supposed he was in a profound sleep.

Jacintha, as if deluding her imagination with this idea, scarcely breathed or moved for some minutes ; then kissing

the icy lips, her tears burst forth anew, and kneeling down, she implored his departed spirit, if it still hovered over this earthly scene, to pardon all he had ever deemed amiss in her conduct—the little inadvertencies and errors into which youth and inexperience might have led her; for of ever having intentionally offended him, her heart acquitted her. Oh! what comfort did she derive from that acquittal!—Could she now have reproached herself with ever having wilfully caused him pain—now that it was beyond her power to make the smallest atonement for doing so, how dreadfully agonizing would have been her feelings!

Utterly absorbed in grief, she remained kneeling by the bed-side, till roused by the housekeeper, who, on missing her, had instantly risen, and was directed by Gillian to the chamber, whither she naturally concluded she was gone.

She

She informed Jacintha that her mother and sister were in the parlour, impatient to see her. Jacintha longed to have the first interview with them over, and with another lingering look at the pale countenance which had so often beamed with kindness and benevolence upon her, she quitted the room, and descended to the parlour.

On entering, the tears she had tried to suppress, gushed in torrents from her, and with expanded arms she flew to throw herself upon the bosom of her mother, who, with Miss Gertrude, was seated at the head of the breakfast-table; but this Mrs. Greville prevented her from doing, by extending one hand to keep her at a distance, while with the other she pulled out her handkerchief to cover her face, as did Gertrude at the same instant.

Shocked by this conduct, which was not more cruel than unexpected, for affliction, Jacintha imagined, could not fail of softening the heart of her mother, she threw herself, sobbing and trembling, upon a chair.

“ Ah, Miss !” cried Mrs. Greville, after the silence of a few minutes, “ you may well lament, indeed,” slowly withdrawing the handkerchief from her face as she spoke ; “ for you have lost a real friend !”

Jacintha clasped her hands together.

“ But what is your grief compared to poor Gertrude’s and mine ?” cried she (here Gertrude, who had also uncovered her face, sighed, and attempted to look sorrowful) ; “ for, according to the laws of Nature, you cannot feel as she and I do on the present occasion.”

Jacintha,

Jacintha, ignorant as she was of what this speech alluded to, could only suppose it was meant to insinuate that she did not possess so great a portion of sensibility as her mother and sister—an insinuation which only hurt her, as it tended to prove she was still as little regarded as ever by them; and one of the most ardent wishes of her heart was to live upon terms of amity and affection with such near relations.

“So Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy would not condescend to come down?” cried Mrs. Greyville, after pausing a moment, to try whether Jacintha would make any reply to what she had just said; their refusing to do so, does not agree with the professions of regard they made for their poor brother.”

“Good Heavens! Madam,” exclaimed Jacintha, who now felt a degree of resentment, which the former

words of Mrs. Greville had failed of inspiring; "you wrang them if you doubt the sincerity of their professions."

She then proceeded to explain the situation of Mrs. Decourcy at the time Mr. Jones's letter arrived.

"Well, I am glad to hear their not coming does not proceed from a want of regard," said Mrs. Greville; "for nothing hurts one so much, particularly in the hour of affliction, as unkindness and neglect from those with whom we are connected."

"Nothing, indeed," said Jacintha, emphatically, and looking expressively at her mother as she spoke. Mrs. Greville either did not, or would not, pretend to understand the meaning of these glances; and, after asking a few trifling questions of Jacintha, relative
to

to her journey, the housekeeper, who had hitherto modestly forborne to make her appearance, was summoned to breakfast.

As soon as it was over, she sat down, by Jacintha's desire, who was herself unequal to the task, to acquaint Mr. Decourcy with the melancholy event which had taken place.

In the course of the day, Jacintha put into her mother's hands the pocket-book which she had received from Mr. Decourcy, and which she could not avoid seeing, imparted to her much pleasure and consolation; indeed, in every instance, it was evident that her grief was of a yielding nature; and that, notwithstanding the virtues, the tenderness, the uniform indulgence of her departed husband, he would soon cease to be remembered with regret by her.

Jacintha

Jacintha was astonished at this want of feeling ; she tried, however, as much as possible, to prevent her thoughts from dwelling upon it, lest it should utterly efface the sentiments she wished to entertain for her mother.

CHAP. VIII.

“ Envy, like the sun, does beat

“ With scorching rays on all that’s high and great.”

WALLER.

TIME passed mournfully with Jacintha; she every where missed her father: his little study, his neglected garden, his forsaken bower, continually brought to her view the loss she had sustained, and impressed her mind with the deepest sadness. All her apprehensions, her disquietudes about Egbert now returned, and she could not help wishing to quit a place which, at present, strengthened the most corroding regrets.

At the expected time, a letter arrived from Mr. Decourcy, addressed to Mrs. Greville. It contained the most tender condolence on her late loss, and solemn assurance of befriending to the utmost of his power, both her and her family; he confirmed to her the settlement he had made upon Mr. Greville of two hundred a year, and said he had also instructed his agent to settle every thing relative to the funeral, and provide mourning for the family. He mentioned Mrs. Decourcy's slow amendment, the deep regret she felt at her brother's death, and her strong anxiety for Jacintha's return.

This letter, far from inspiring Mrs. Greville with pleasure and gratitude, as might have been supposed from the contents, displeased and disappointed her. She had flattered herself that Mr. Decourcy would have invited her and Gertrude to spend at least the winter at
his

his house; and his not doing so, together with the ardent wishes he expressed for Jacintha's return, mortified and irritated her too highly, to permit her to feel his generosity. Indeed, on this head, she did not deem him entitled to many thanks, as she tried to persuade herself that, in acting as he had done, he but merely fulfilled his duty.

She could not entirely conceal her dissatisfaction from Jacintha, neither the cause from which it sprung; she also hinted something like an intention of going to town, notwithstanding the cruel neglect of Mr. Decourcy, and her determination of keeping Jacintha with her till that period.

Final arrangements were made for the funeral upon the receipt of Mr. Decourcy's letter, and two days after it took place. All the family, Mrs. Greville excepted, prepared to attend, as
did

did most of the villagers; for Greville was universally beloved.

But when Jacintha saw the coffin removing, when she reflected that in this world she should never more behold him, to whom she was so strongly attached by the ties of affection and gratitude, the fortitude with which she had hitherto endeavoured to submit to the dispensations of Providence utterly failed—she fainted, and was reconveyed to her chamber. On reviving, she was left to indulge the anguish of her heart alone; for those who had assisted in recovering her, were impatient to join the funeral procession, which had already set out. Jacintha wept aloud.—The day was now declining, and its falling glooms, together with the solemn stillness which reigned around, only interrupted by the dull reverberations of the bell, that sounded her father's summons to his last dreary home, heightened

ened, if possible, her melancholy.—At length the bell ceased to toll ; Jacintha started from the bed on which she had been placed, and hastened to a window commanding a view of the church-yard. She saw the mournful procession entering the church, preceded by the Clergyman. She dropped upon her knees—she moved not—she scarcely breathed—she seemed as if she feared to disturb the solemn service,

The church was lit up on this melancholy occasion, and, by the wavering lights from its windows, she could discern the spot where her father was to be interred ; she saw, with something like a sensation of pleasure, that he was to be laid beside the tomb which Egbert had erected over the remains of his mother and grandfather—a neighbour, in death, as in life, to those whom he regarded ! But the gleam of pleasure, if the sensation she felt at this moment could

could be styled so, faded away, on beholding the villagers thronging round the grave, as if to take a last farewell.

Her tears again burst forth.—“Farewel!” she cried, “my father, farewell for ever in this world!—in the next, I trust, we shall meet again!—Without such a hope, how could we support the anguish which attends a separation from those we love—how overcome the shivering horror which seizes us, at beholding their beloved remains consigned to darkness and decay?”

After the funeral was over, the villagers retired to their respective homes, all but a few who accompanied the mourning family to their habitation.

Jacintha was invited to the parlour; but she declined the invitation. Real grief, like real charity, is unostentatious, and she did not wish to leave retirement

ment till she could regain some degree of composure.

She now endeavoured to do so ; she reflected upon the submission which was due to the will of Heaven ; she reflected upon the happiness to which the spirits of the just were transported, on their exit from this life ; and, by degrees, the acuteness of her anguish gave way to these reflections.

Her fortitude returned ; a soft and pleasing melancholy took possession of her mind, too soothing to her feelings to wish to have it interrupted.

When she thought of her father being now a blessed inhabitant of heaven, rejoicing with kindred angels in the glories of his Creator, she almost, in the idea of his supreme felicity, lost the recollection of the irreparable loss she had sustained by his death. Nature, however,

ever, prevailed at intervals, and gushing tears proclaimed the keen perception of the loss being deeply impressed upon her mind.

Mrs. Greville and Gertrude lost much of their melancholy after the funeral had taken place—a convincing proof that it had originated more from a sense of propriety, than from real sorrow. Their evident insensibility, as well as many unpleasant circumstances, made Jacintha ardently wish to quit them; but, to her extreme mortification, on expressing a desire to return with the housekeeper to Hertfordshire, which she made Mrs. Decourcy's illness an excuse for doing, Mrs. Greville positively declared she would not let her leave Wye-field, till she left it herself, which could not be at least for a month.

“ You are really then going to London, Madam,” said Jacintha.

“ Yes,

“Yes, Ma’am,” replied Mrs. Greville; “I suppose there is nothing wonderful in my doing so. Perhaps you think I have no friends there; but if you do, you are very much mistaken; I have many of my own relations there, of whom I have no reason to be ashamed, though, to be sure, I can’t boast of having a Nabob amongst them.”

“If you could,” said Jacintha, “it would be a very insignificant boast. It is of the virtues, not the opulence, of our friends, we should be proud.”

“Oh dear! you always affected to be sentimental,” cried Mrs. Greville, with a sarcastic smile, “no doubt for the purpose of obtaining admiration; but if every one thought as I do, you would be disappointed in your aim, for I detest affectation.”

“So”

“ So I perceive, Madam,” said Jacintha; “ for I am firmly convinced you both act and speak from your *real* feelings.”

“ I don't know, Ma'am,” cried Mrs. Greville, her colour rising as she spoke, “ whether you mean, by this speech, to compliment me, nor do I care; though I am rather inclined to think the contrary, for I see you are horridly vexed at my not letting you leave this place immediately; but I think you may reconcile yourself to a longer stay in Wyefield, when you reflect on not having had any share in the late fatigue and trouble which all the rest of the family underwent.”

“ Fatigue and trouble,” repeated Jacintha, involuntarily and with indignation, “ good Heavens! what an expression.—Do you call it a fatigue and trouble

trouble to attend the dying bed of a husband and a father?"

"I beg, Miss, you may not misconstrue my expressions," said Mrs. Greville, her colour still increasing, "I hope I know my duty, and have ever performed it as well as other people.

"Would to God I had been here," said Jacintha, without attending to these last words, "to have shared your fatigue and trouble! Would to God I had been here to have heard my father repeat the blessing, which he so fervently, so sweetly bestowed upon me in our parting moments—a blessing which it will be my boast, my pride to think I merited."

"Indeed he well deserved all the attention you could have paid him," cried Mrs. Greville; "of the extent of your obligations to him, you are not yet

aware, nor consequently of the gratitude you owe him."

"If you think I have not a perfect sense of these obligations," replied Jacintha, "I shall be grateful to you, Madam, if you will enlighten me on the subject."

"Depend upon it I mean to do so," said Mrs. Greville, with a malicious smile. To such smiles, however, Jacintha was too much accustomed to attach any particular meaning to this; but to our readers it may possibly give an idea of Mrs. Greville's real intention.

She had, in short, finally determined to conceal no longer the secret relative to Jacintha. In vain the mild form of her husband seemed rising to her view, to reproach her for a determination so contrary to his wishes—his express desire; she persisted in her resolution of making

making a discovery which, she trusted, would lessen Jacintha in the general estimation of the world ; and, above all, diminish, if not utterly deprive her of the regard of Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy. That they would persevere in preferring her to Gertrude, after such a discovery, she could not suppose ; but if they did, she was pretty confident she should, in some degree, be revenged upon them for doing so, by the censure which such flagrant injustice must draw upon them from the world.

To her extreme regret, her husband, as he had often told her would in all probability be the case, had gone to his grave, without imparting to her any of the particulars she was so anxious to know respecting Jacintha ; when convinced he could not recover, she artfully mentioned the name of Jacintha several times to him, in hopes it might lead to some inadvertent expression, that would

betray the long concealed secret ; but Greville, clear and collected to the last moment, never dropped a hint that could in the least degree gratify her curiosity ; on the contrary, he earnestly conjured her never to undeceive Jacintha or the world, with regard to her not being allied to them ; he also spoke in the warmest manner of the virtues of his adopted daughter, and implored Mrs. Greville, if ever she needed it, to extend to her a mother's care, and make her house her asylum.

As soon as she had recovered from the transient shock his death occasioned her, she imparted to Gertrude the secret so long painfully pent up in her bosom concerning Jacintha, omitting however to mention the real motives which had induced her to bestow the name of daughter upon her ; to this measure, she asserted, she was alone influenced by humanity, which the conduct

duct of Jacintha had long since made her repent.

Not satisfied with this falsehood, or rather wishing to conceal (from the desire we all have to appear amiable) the malevolence and selfishness which prompted the present discovery, Mrs. Greville proceeded to tell the astonished Gertrude, that, touched by a similar repentance, her father had, almost in his last moments, desired that Jacintha might no longer be acknowledged one of his family.

“ And, but for the agonies with which he was seized about this time,” cried she, “ I am confident he would have disclosed to me every thing concerning her birth ; however, to know she does not belong to us, will be quite sufficient to prevent our friends from any longer lavishing that kindness and atten-

tion upon her, which they have so long done to our detriment."

"Yes, I think she has too long indeed usurped our rights," exclaimed Gertrude, when amazement would permit her to utter a connected sentence.

"I wonder, mama, you could suffer her to take my place in Mrs. Decourcy's house; no doubt, had she known who she really was, she never would have invited her in preference to me, and one or other of us, I'm sure, she meant to take."

"Well, well, my dear," said Mrs. Greville, "you must only reconcile yourself to what is past, by reflecting on what is to come. I'm sure you'll soon have an opportunity of triumphing over her completely."

The hope and prospect of doing so, tended much more to appease the anger
and

and resentment Gertrude felt, at what she conceived the usurpation of Jacintha, than all the eloquence of her mother.

Impatient to gratify her malice by humbling the lofty spirit of Jacintha, which had hitherto soared above it, and which she doubted not the present discovery effectually doing, she could scarcely be prevented from hastening to communicate it to her; nor would any thing have prevailed on her not to do so, but her mother's representing to her, that if Jacintha was apprized of it before Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy, she would, in all probability, take such underhand measures to ingratiate herself into their favour, or secure that portion of it which she already enjoyed, as might render any attempts hereafter to deprive her of it, ineffectual.

Anxious to develop the mystery which veiled the birth of Jacintha, they carefully examined the papers of Greville, from which they hoped to have received some information respecting it; but their hopes were disappointed.

The day after the funeral, Mr. Decourcy's housekeeper departed from Wyefield; and it was soon evident to Jacintha, that it was not from any wish for her company that her mother prevented her from leaving it at the same time, as she even studiously avoided conversing with her—an example which was followed by Gertrude. The almost total solitude to which she was consequently consigned, together with the marked unkindness with which she was treated upon every occasion, was not by any means calculated to diminish the melancholy with which the death of her supposed father had impressed Jacintha's

Jacintha's mind ; every day increased it, for every day gave her new cause to deplore his loss : and, but for the sweet hope she entertained of Egbert's return, and the prospect she beheld of being soon restored to Mrs. Decourcy, her spirits would have utterly failed her.— Her only pleasure was derived from wandering through the scenes which had been the favourite haunts of Greville ; amidst these scenes, with a “sadly pleased remembrance,” she dwelt upon the many proofs she had received of his tenderness—his affection.

Here, in the gloom of evening, she could often almost have fancied she heard his mild voice mingling in the mournful breeze, and saw his pale form gliding amidst the distant solitudes, in mournful contemplation.

The time at length arrived for her removal from a place, where it was

sible for her to enjoy any thing like happiness, till time had blunted the poignancy of her feelings.

Previous to quitting Wyefield, Mrs. Greville placed her sons at a school near it; and from this, and other arrangements, Jacintha was pretty certain it was not her design to make a short stay in London. Of her intention of going thither, Mr. Decourcy was apprized; she assured him it was a measure dictated more by necessity than inclination, change of scene being absolutely requisite for the restoration of her health and spirits.

Without making any observations upon what she had said, Mr. Decourcy, in reply to her letter, merely invited her to rest herself at his house in her way to London, and promised to send his carriage to meet her at St. Albans.

Though

Though Jacintha so ardently wished to leave Wyefield, she could not bid it what, in spite of her reason, she could not help believing would be a long farewell (from a gloomy sadness, a kind of prophetic feeling which had taken possession of her mind) without a sigh of regret ; so strong was her attachment for what she considered the place of her nativity—an attachment which can never be obliterated from hearts of sensibility.

With feelings totally dissimilar from those of Mrs. Greville and Gertrude, she commenced her journey ; there was indeed nothing of melancholy or mourning about them but their habits.

The second day they reached St. Albans, and found Mr. Decourcy's carriage waiting their arrival. As soon as

CHAP. IX.

“ Not the last sounding could surprise me more,

“ That summons drowsy mortals to their doom.”

DRYDEN.

GERTRUDE having been previously instructed by her mother, contrived a pretext for drawing Jacintha from the parlour soon after dinner. The moment they retired, Mrs. Greville hastened to make the discovery, which she trusted would sink Jacintha in the estimation of Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy. She began by repeating her acknowledgments to them for their kindness and attention on the late melancholy occasion,
and

and proceeded to say, she had been impatient for the present interview, in order to disclose to them a secret which Mr. Greville, upon his death-bed, commanded her to reveal.

At these words Mrs. Decourcy, who had hitherto sat with her head resting pensively upon her arm, started, and fastened her eyes with the most anxious expression upon Mrs. Greville.— Abashed by her looks, which Mrs. Greville thought expressive of something like a doubt of her veracity, she involuntarily paused; her confusion, however, was but transitory, and she briefly and unhesitatingly informed them of all she desired them to know, or indeed had to disclose, concerning Jacintha.

Surprise seemed to seal the lips of Mr. Decourcy for some minutes; as to Mrs. Decourcy, she appeared infinitely more shocked than surprised, nor did she

she attempt to break the silence which prevailed when Mrs. Greville ceased speaking.

“ ’Tis a strange affair,” at length cried Mr. Decourcy, interrupting it, and raising his eyes from the table on which they had hitherto been bent, as if in profound meditation; “ did Mr. Greville never disclose to you whose child she was?”

“ Never,” replied Mrs. Greville, “ though I frequently importuned him to do so.”

“ And what motive could actuate you to receive a child, of whose connections you were ignorant,” cried Mr. Decourcy, “ and pass her for your own?”

“ Good-nature, and a wish to oblige Mr. Greville,” replied she.

“ Oh.

"Oh Heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Decourcy, at these words.

The suddenness of this exclamation startled Mrs. Greville, and, for a few minutes, silenced Mr. Decourcy.

"Did you never," he then interrogated with renewed earnestness, "even conjecture who her parents were?"

"Never," said Mrs. Greville, "it was utterly impossible for me to do so. I own I should have been tempted to imagine she was, in some way or other, connected to Mr. Greville, from the extreme fondness he always manifested for her, but that he assured me to the contrary."

"Has Jacintha been told that she is not your child?"

"No,

“ No, I thought it better first to inform you and Mrs. Decourcy.”

“ Why should she be told ?” asked Mrs. Decourcy.

Mrs. Greville hesitated for a moment, at a loss to form any excuse for making a communication, which it was natural to suppose must be so painful ; then suddenly recollecting herself—

“ Your brother commanded me to tell her ; and I cannot bring myself to disobey any of his commands.”

“ Undoubtedly not,” said Mr. Decourcy.

He then, with the utmost earnestness of voice and manner, enquired particularly the age of Jacintha when received by Mrs. Greville ; and how, where, and
at

at what period, she had been brought to her.

Mrs. Greville fully answered all those enquiries, and he again expressed his surprise at Mr. Greville's never having entrusted her with the secret of Jacintha's birth; then resting his head upon his hand, he continued for some minutes in deep and gloomy meditation. At length raising his eyes, and looking earnestly at Mrs. Decourcy—

“Did your brother,” said he, “never give you a hint on the subject?—You have frequently told me he was very unreserved in his communications to you.”

“Is it natural to suppose,” replied Mrs. Decourcy, “that the confidence he denied to his wife he would repose in me?”

“And

“And to this hour you believed Jacintha to be his daughter?”

“Till this hour, I knew not that he meant to deny her,” said Mrs. Decourcy.

The dark brows of Mr. Decourcy, at these words, became contracted, his cheek flushed, his eyes lightened with indignation, and starting from his chair, he traversed the room with a disordered step. Not more surprised than confounded by his manner, Mrs. Greville sat wildly staring at him, till her attention was attracted by Mrs. Decourcy; who, on attempting to leave her chair, sunk back, almost fainting.

“Bless me, what can be the matter?” exclaimed Mrs. Greville, as she tried to raise the languid head of her sister-in-law; “do pray, dear Sir,” addressing
ing

ing herself to Mr. Decourcy, "call for assistance?"

Mr. Decourcy flew to the bell, and having rung it with a violence sufficient to alarm the whole house, darted from the room.

Among those who obeyed his hasty summons to the parlour, were Gertrude and Jacintha; trembling and alarmed, the latter assisted in recovering Mrs. Decourcy, who, the moment she was able to move, quitted the room, leaning upon her arm, to the extreme mortification of Mrs. Greville, who had offered her services, which were rejected with the most repulsive coldness.

On reaching her chamber, Mrs. Decourcy threw herself into a chair without speaking, and appeared violently agitated.

“ Dear Madam,” said Jacintha, “ something, I fear, has happened to disturb you.”

“ That invidious woman !” exclaimed Mrs. Decourcy, and paused.

Inexpressibly shocked by these words, which she could not doubt alluded to her mother, Jacintha was unable to repeat her enquiry concerning the cause of Mrs. Decourcy’s agitation; she was also equally unable to repress her tears, at the idea of her mother having given uncasiness to their kind, their mutual benefactress.

“ That invidious woman !” again repeated Mrs. Decourcy ; “ she you called your mother—she has disclaimed you—disowned you—renounced you for ever !”

“ Good

“ Good God !” exclaimed Jacintha, with uplifted hands and eyes, “ what have I done to merit such conduct ?— what has she alledged against me to justify it ?”

“ Nothing ;—nor has she uttered an untruth in saying you were not her child !”

“ Not her child !” repeated Jacintha, starting and gazing upon Mrs. Decourcy, as if she imagined her senses were forsaking her.

“ Be composed, my dear girl,” said Mrs. Decourcy, who appeared struggling with her own feelings, in order to try and calm the emotions of Jacintha. She then briefly acquainted her with all that Mrs. Greville had communicated—
“ Which, I am convinced,” continued she, “ from many circumstances, she never was desired to disclose by my
brother.

brother. The motives which have actuated her to divulge what has been so long, so carefully concealed, are evident to me ;—but her hopes, her intentions shall be frustrated to the utmost of my power,”

Though Jacintha had no reason to be attached to Mrs. Greville, nor those of her family who now existed, she could not hear that she was cast off, unacknowledged, unowned, unclaimed by any relative, without feeling the severest anguish. Her pride, her sensibility, were alike wounded ; and, overcome by the violent and various emotions of her soul, she dropped in trembling agitation at the feet of her benefactress.

Mrs. Decourcy raised and embraced her ; she said every thing she thought could compose her feelings ; she assured her that the late discovery, instead of lessening,

lessening, rather increased her affection for her.

“ It was not because I thought you my relation,” cried she, “ that I esteemed and loved you—it was because I thought you amiable and engaging ;—while, therefore, you retain the qualities which first engaged my esteem, my regard must remain undiminished.”

“ Oh ! Madam,” said Jacintha, bathing her hand with tears, “ I am fully sensible of your goodness ; but I cannot immediately get the better of the shock which your information has given me. You, I am sure, can picture to yourself what my feelings must be, at the idea of not knowing a being in this vast universe, whose protection or assistance I have a right to claim.”

“Your own merit must ever give you a claim to the friendship of the worthy,” said Mrs. Decourcy.

“Ah! Madam,” replied Jacintha, “that is a claim, I fear, which very few would allow; and even was it admitted, to incur continual obligations can never be pleasing to a heart of real sensibility.”

“My dear Jacintha,” cried Mrs. Decourcy, “life is chequered; our pleasures are seldom without alloy, or our pains without mitigation;—in finding your happiness imperfect, you but share the common lot of humanity; let that reflection, therefore, reconcile you to your situation, and prevent you from foregoing the power of enjoying the present good, because it does not come to you exactly in the manner you could wish.”

“It

“It shall be my study to profit by your advice,” replied Jacintha; “but you yourself, my dear Madam,” she continued, as if anxious to find an excuse for the painful feelings she could not conquer, “seemed shocked and distressed by the discovery Mrs. Greville has made.”

“I wished to have prevented it,” said Mrs. Decourcy.

“Were you then aware that she intended to make it?” asked Jacintha, with eager quickness; “did you then really know that I was not the child of your brother?”

“I have not said that I did,” cried Mrs. Decourcy, with uncommon gravity.

“No; but you implied it, I thought, Madam.”

“ I did not mean to do so, then,” said Mrs. Decourcy.

“ Is there no clue, no means by which I could trace my parents ?” asked Jacintha.

“ None,” said Mrs. Decourcy ; “ all enquiries relative to them, must for ever be unavailing !”

“ For ever !” repeated Jacintha, mournfully, “ for ever must I remain in ignorance of the authors of my existence ?—Perhaps at this very moment they live—they think of their deserted daughter !”

“ If they do, believe me, it is not with any wish to acknowledge her,” replied Mrs. Decourcy ; “ that their long relinquishment of her must convince you.”

Jacintha

Jacintha clasped her hands together, and, by her looks, expressed the deepest sorrow.

“Once more,” said Mrs. Decourcy, “I advise you not to let unavailing regrets poison your present enjoyments.”

“I will endeavour to conquer them, my dear Madam.”

Mrs. Decourcy's woman now appeared, to inform her Lady that Mr. Decourcy wished to speak to her; she immediately arose to attend him, in her dressing-room, where she understood he was; affectionately pressing Jacintha's hand at the same moment, and bidding her remember what she had said to her.

Jacintha retired to her own chamber, to try to collect and compose her spirits ere she rejoined Mrs. Greville; whom she

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not add to your happiness to know any thing of them."

"I understand your meaning, Madam," said Jacintha, colouring; "but I cannot, I will not believe that my parents were unamiable. Mr. Greville's being their friend, is a convincing proof to me that they were not."

"Pray how do you know Mr. Greville was their friend?" demanded Mrs. Greville.

"By accepting the guardianship of their unfortunate child," replied Jacintha; "what but friendship could have induced him to take her to his bosom, and educate her as his own?"

"Why, indeed, 'tis very natural to suppose nothing else could have induced him to do so," said Mrs. Greville; "but his having had a regard for your
parents,

parents, is no proof of their worth; for, poor dear man ! he was so good, so innocent himself, that it was an easy matter for any one to impose upon him by false appearances."

"That I firmly believe," said Jacintha; "and I also believe that much of his felicity proceeded from his not detecting the imposition practised on him. Simplicity and credulity are in some cases essential to happiness."

Jacintha involuntarily fastened her eyes upon Mrs. Greville, as she uttered these last words, whose rising colour clearly proved she understood their meaning.

At this instant a servant entered with an apology for Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy's not appearing again that night, as the former had letters on business to write, and the latter was extremely indisposed.

Jacintha flew to Mrs. Decourcy's chamber on receiving this intelligence, but was stopped at the entrance by her woman, who said her Lady had retired to rest, and wished not to be disturbed. She had the satisfaction, however, of learning that her indisposition was not of a nature to cause any alarm.

She could not bear, in the present disturbed state of her mind, to return to the parlour; she accordingly repaired to her chamber, where, with increasing wonder, she revolved all that had passed throughout the day. She tried to reconcile herself to the unexpected discovery that had taken place, by reflecting that it had neither deprived her of the friendship, nor would lessen her in the estimation, of those she regarded; but, though she endeavoured to banish the regrets it occasioned, she could not divest herself of a
strong


strong anxiety to learn something concerning her parents; a conviction, however, that this was an anxiety which could never be gratified, determined her at length to try and subdue it. But though she did not imagine Mrs. Decourcy could have satisfied her curiosity on this head, she could not avoid thinking, from some inadvertent expressions which had dropped from her, that she knew, previous to Mrs. Greville's disclosure, that she was not the child of her brother.

Why Mr. Greville should desire this long concealed secret to be revealed, when no purpose could be answered by its disclosure, was a circumstance which astonished Jacintha, and made her at length suspect that he had never expressed such a desire. This suspicion, Mrs. Decourcy's recollected words confirmed; and Mrs. Greville's motives for divulging it were perfectly compre-

hended. The indignation with which this new instance of her cruelty and falsehood inspired Jacintha, made her almost rejoice that Mrs. Greville had no further claims upon her duty and affection.

On entering the breakfast-parlour, the next morning, Jacintha found only Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy there; the latter still looked pale and languid, and by the countenance of the former, it was evident his mind was greatly disturbed. After the usual compliments were over, a silence of some minutes ensued; Mr. Decourcy then, though with visible reluctance, took the hand of Jacintha, and desired her not to let the late discovery affect her spirits, as it could make no alteration in the sentiments her friends entertained for her.

His words were kind, but his manner was the reverse; and Jacintha could



could not help thinking, a thought which wounded her to the very heart, that, on the present occasion, his language and feelings were totally dissimilar.

She endeavoured, however, to dissipate the involuntary gloom which this idea threw over her, by trying to persuade herself it was erroneous ; that it was not from any diminution of his regard, but something which had happened to discompose his mind, that his air was so cold when he addressed her.

On the entrance of Mrs. Greville and Gertrude, a general, though evidently forced conversation took place, every one present appearing much more inclined to indulge their own thoughts, than enter into discourse.

Jacintha could not avoid noticing the cold and ceremonious manner in which

which Mrs. Decourcy behaved to Mrs. Greville and Gertrude, whose looks proved they had not been less quick in perceiving it.

Mrs. Greville indeed, to her extreme regret and mortification, perceived that it was not Jacintha, but herself, she had lessened by the late discovery ;—a convincing proof that doubts were entertained of her being desired to make it by Mr. Greville ; so humbled did she feel at the idea of having her veracity doubted, that, but for the pain it was evident the disclosure had given Jacintha, she would have regretted it.

Unable to bear the supercilious conduct of Mrs. Decourcy, which her heart told her she but too well merited, she resolved on departing for London the next day. This intention, which met with no opposition either from Mr. or Mrs. Decourcy, she announced at dinner ;

dinner; and accordingly, the ensuing morning, departed for the metropolis, to the great joy of Gertrude, who was impatient for its pleasures, and who, besides, detested a residence under the roof with Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy, from the involuntary restraint she felt in their presence.

Mrs. Greville affected to take a tender leave of Jacintha, and said, though she had no longer the honour of being considered as her mother, she should still retain for her the same regard she had always felt.

“ I am convinced you will, Madam,” replied Jacintha, with a sarcastic smile she could not suppress, “ nor will my gratitude for it be diminished, though I should receive fewer proofs than you have hitherto given me of it.”

CHAP. X.

“ I fancy

“ I'm now turn'd wild, a commoner of nature,

“ Of all forsaken.”

DRYDEN.

WHILST Mrs. Greville and Gertrude were enjoying the pleasures for which they had so long panted, the happiness of Jacintha was gradually declining, like the tender blossoms of a too early spring before a nipping wind ; and her short-lived felicity but rendered more acute her present sorrow, as transient gleams of sunshine, on a wintry day, but render more oppressive the glooms

glooms by which they are succeeded.—The diminution of a happiness, which she had so sensibly felt, and gratefully acknowledged, was occasioned by the striking alteration which took place in the conduct of Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy towards her, soon after the departure of Mrs. Greville.

From the most conciliating tenderness, the kindest attentions, and expressions of regard, they suddenly became cool and neglectful. Mr. Decourcy no longer sought opportunities of conversing with her, as he had formerly done, on subjects which were calculated to expand her ideas, and improve her judgment; but observed, upon every occasion, to her an almost total silence. Nor did Mrs. Decourcy appear to feel more pleasure in her society than he did.

This

This cruel, this unexpected change Jacintha imputed to the late discovery ; she knew no other cause to which she could ascribe it ; for her memory could furnish her with no instance of ever having acted in any manner that could excite their displeasure. She concluded she was indebted to her supposed relationship to them, for their past kindness ; and that, since they could no longer consider her as a connection, they sincerely regretted having taken her under their protection ; though they could not think of withdrawing it, after their solemn promises of continuing it to her—promises which, she now had reason to suppose, were made from the impulse of the moment, without consideration or reflection.—Oh ! how did she lament not having the power of releasing them from these, as she imagined, repented promises ; but she knew no roof, except their's, which would afford her a shelter.

She

She now began to experience a misery, which can only be exceeded by that attendant on a guilty conscience—the misery of dependance; and wept with bitterness over the disastrous fate which obliged her to receive favours from those, whose regard for her seemed so totally extinguished—favours which, except bestowed by the hand of Affection, must ever be oppressive to a noble and a feeling heart.

Humbled and afflicted, wounded to the very soul to think it was only imaginary ties which had interested Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy about her, her nights were often passed in tears, her days in restless inquietude; she could no longer attend to her usual avocations, but strove to beguile the wretchedness of her thoughts in rambling about, whenever the weather would permit her to leave the house.

There

There was a mournful sympathy between her and Nature in the present season, which was soothing to her feelings.

“But the sympathy will not long continue,” she has exclaimed; “ah! will my hopes, like the verdure of these groves, revive?—will my heart, like them, again become the resort of harmony and joy?”

“She loved to walk beneath the trees,
amidst the leafless boughs of which,

“Barren as lances, the wind

“Makes wintry music, sighing as it goes;”

where no other noise was heard, save the
faint warble of the red-breast, content

“With slender notes, and more than half suppress’d,

“Pleas’d with his solitudes, and flitting light,

“From spray to spray, shaking where’er he rests,

“From many a twig the pendant drops of ice,

“That

“ That tinkle in the wither’d leaves below.

“ Stillness, accompany’d by sounds so soft,”

charmed Jacintha even more than total silence could have done, and often lulled her anguish.

But though the calm scenes of Nature could sooth, it was only the idea of Egbert’s love—the hope, the expectation of his quick return, which could console her. That the alteration in her situation, would occasion any alteration in his sentiments, she never for a moment fancied; on the contrary, she was convinced that sorrow would doubly endear her to him, and that, with eager transport, he would snatch her from misery and dependance.—These thoughts sometimes almost restored her to perfect tranquillity; but too often the pressure of present ill, repelled the pleasure which prospects of future happiness were calculated to inspire.

Severely

Severely as her pride was wounded by the altered conduct of her protectors, her sensibility was still more severely injured. She esteemed, she loved them, particularly Mrs. Decourcy, with the utmost fervency ; and, in the most exalted, the most independent situation that Fortune could have placed her, the diminution of that lady's regard would have cast a cloud over her happiness.

But her painful feelings were not entirely excited on her own account : the change which took place in the conduct of Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy to her, was not more striking than that which took place in their behaviour to each other. Their mutual tenderness, their domestic harmony were gone ; pensive and unsocial, they sat in each other's company, and Jacintha felt scarcely more grief at their altered manners to her, than to one another. The cause of this change it was utterly impossible for her even to conjecture,

conjecture, and the surprise was not inferior to the regret it excited.

Three weeks passed away, unmarked by any occurrence, and without decreasing the coldness and reserve of Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy; a gloomy melancholy seemed to have taken possession of their minds; they admitted no company, and forbore entirely to speak of returning to London, though apprized of their house being ready for their reception.

The dejection of Jacintha daily increased; the natural cheerfulness of her mind, which had so often given her strength to bear up against sorrow and oppression, was completely subdued by the idea of her forlorn situation; her warm, her glowing, her affectionate heart was chilled, was agonized at the idea of her being so totally disregarded as she now believed herself to be. The
existence,

existence, which appeared so little esteemed in the eyes of others, would soon have lost all value in her own, but for the assurance she retained of Egbert's love—the hope she entertained of his soon returning, of his again connecting her to society. At present she seemed to herself a blank, a cipher in the great account—a solitary being, who, like the lonely flower of the rock, might fade away, unmissed and unlamented.

CHAP. XI.

“ Dissembled quiet, sit upon my face,

“ My sorrow to my eyes no passage find,

“ But sink within.”

IT was now about the season that, on the two preceding years, Jacintha had been so near in idea to, but so remote in reality from, happiness; and she often reflected, with mingled surprise and regret, on the many strange incidents and vicissitudes she had experienced in her short journey through life. Deeply meditating on them one day, she heeded not how far she had wandered,

dered, nor thought of returning home, till the glooms of evening began to gather round her, and reminded her that, in all probability, she should keep Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy waiting dinner. This idea had no sooner occurred, than she hastened forwards.

The path she took, wound between a thick shrubbery, where clumps of evergreens almost excluded the faint light that still lingered in the sky, and spread such an additional gloom around, that had not this been the shortest way to the house, Jacintha would have avoided it. She was still far from home, when she suddenly heard some one hastily following her. She felt somewhat startled, and her alarm was not diminished when, casting a timid glance behind, she perceived the person who evidently pursued her, was a man, so muffled up that, even had the light been stronger

stronger than it now was, his features could not have been distinguished.

She moved on with redoubled quickness; but, notwithstanding the swiftness with which she walked, or rather ran, she was soon overtaken.

“ I almost gave up all hopes of seeing you,” exclaimed the stranger, catching her hand as he spoke.

His voice was not unfamiliar to Jacintha, though she could not recollect where she had heard it.

“ Me!” cried she, in a tremulous accent, and endeavouring at the same moment to disengage her hand, “ me did you expect to see?”

“ You,” he replied.

Jacintha now recognized the voice of Lord Gwytherin.

“ Oh Heavens ! Miss Greville, this is indeed an unexpected happiness,” said he, eagerly pressing her hand to his lips.

This action excited the indignation of Jacintha, and restored the faculties which surprise had suspended. She forced away her hand, and attempted to pass him.

“ Stop,” cried Lord Gwytherin, still impeding her progress, “ stop, I conjure you—if but for a minute.”

“ I insist, my Lord,” said Jacintha, trying to speak composedly, though her heart fluttered with terror, “ I insist, my Lord, upon your not detaining me !”

“ I

“ I cannot, I will not let you pass,” replied he, “ till you have heard what I wish to say—till you have heard that—”

He paused, for at this instant approaching steps were heard, and in the next, the voice of Mr. Decourcy, discoursing with his gamekeeper, with whom he was returning homewards after a day's sport. Jacintha had no further occasion now to repeat her commands to his Lordship to let her pass; he turned from her with precipitation, and hastily disappeared; but he was not quick enough to elude the observation of Mr. Decourcy, who advancing to Jacintha, desired to know who the person was that had fled with such quickness from her.

Jacintha was too much agitated and confused to attempt concealing the truth, had she even been inclined to do

ment to them being, she supposed, considered by him a kind of indirect indignity to himself. But to whatever motives she ascribed the resentment she imagined he now felt, the apprehensions it excited in her bosom were still the same. She trembled to think of the consequences which might result from his giving way to it, well acquainted as she was with the haughtiness of his spirit, and the vindictive violence of Lord Gwytherin's disposition.

She endeavoured to speak of something else than the incident which she imagined had caused it, but in vain; Mr. Decourcy persisted in dwelling on her interview with Lord Gwytherin, and questioning her concerning it.— These questions teased and perplexed Jacintha, and she rejoiced to enter the house, as she hoped she should there be able to avoid them; of this, however, she became very doubtful, on his desiring

desiring her to follow him into the parlour;—but, contrary to her expectations, he did not appear inclined to renew his interrogations; and his discontinuing them, dissipated in a great measure the apprehensions of Jacintha.

He ordered a servant to acquaint Mrs. Decourcy of his return; the man came back in a few minutes, and said his mistress was not at home.

“Not at home!” repeated Mr. Decourcy, starting in manifest agitation from a chair upon which he had thrown himself, “how—whither is she gone?”

“I cannot tell, Sir,” replied the man, “nor do any of the servants know;—but she has not been long out, for ’tis not half an hour since her maid was with her, in her dressing-room.”

Mr. Decourcy bit his lips, knít his brows, and traversed the room in an agitation which Jacintha could no longer place to her own account; and which she was astonished so trivial a circumstance as that of finding Mrs. Decourcy out, when he expected to have found her at home, could inspire, and to this circumstance it was evidently owing.

That he should be surprised at hearing she was out at such an hour, unattended, Jacintha could not indeed wonder at; nor could she possibly account for her being so, except by supposing that, like her fellow-mortals, she was now and then a little whimsical.

A quarter of an hour passed in profound silence; Jacintha wishing, but fearing to quit the room, lest she should displease Mr. Decourcy. At the expiration of this period, Mrs. Decourcy entered,

entered, but without appearing to have been out.

“ You have just returned from your walk, I presume,” said Mr. Decourcy, with coolness.

She answered (Jacintha thought) rather confusedly, and said something of having been tempted down the avenue by the clearness of the evening; then ringing the bell, as if to prevent any further enquiries, she asked whether dinner was ready, and being answered in the affirmative, directly led the way to the dining-parlour.

Soon after the cloth was removed, and the attendants withdrawn, a few words inadvertently dropped from Mr. Decourcy expressive of a wish to speak to Mrs. Decourcy alone. In consequence of these words, though without seeming to have noticed them,

Jacintha immediately formed an excuse for quitting the parlour; from whence she hastened to her chamber, where she endeavoured to amuse herself by reading, but the disturbance of her mind prevented her from deriving any entertainment from books.

The unhappiness of Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy occupied her thoughts; and, if she ceased to think of that unhappiness for a moment, it was but to think of Lord Gwytherin, who she could not avoid believing, after the late adventure, still persisted in his designs against her. Neither could she avoid thinking, from the place in which she had met him, and which was her most favourite haunt, that he knew some person in the house, who acquainted him with her movements. This idea alarmed her, as she knew it was difficult to guard against the designs of a secret enemy; and none but an enemy could,
in

in any manner, attempt to betray her into the power of Lord Gwytherin. But the Being on whom she depended for protection, was equal, she knew (and the idea calmed her mind) to defeat all the machinations that could be formed against her, and conduct her with safety and honour through the mazy path of life.

From herself her thoughts again reverted to Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy—unhappy and dejected in the midst of blessings.

“ Ah !” cried she, “ how little can the world judge from appearances !—If it could look into their hearts, I fear it would find there was more cause to pity than to envy them.—What can this untold sorrow be, which has power to poison all their enjoyments ?—But for me to attempt to conjecture it, would only be to bewilder and distract myself. The thorn which rankles in their breasts

is

is carefully hidden ; and why should I wish to discover, except I thought I could extract it.

“ That I could, in any degree, occasion their present unhappiness, is surely impossible,” said she, endeavouring to dispel an idea, which at this instant obtruded itself upon her mind, of having, in some way or other, been the cause of it—an idea calculated to annihilate her little remaining peace, and inflict the deepest distress upon her.

“ If I really thought so,” cried she, wildly starting from her chair, and traversing the room with a disordered step, “ no consideration should detain me longer in their house.—But no, ’tis impossible this can be the case.”

She resumed her seat, and again tried, by reading, to divert her thoughts ; but her efforts to do so were vain : there

was

was a weight, a sadness on her heart which could only be relieved by tears. The loneliness of her chamber, which was remote from the inhabited part of the house, and the mournful howling of the blast without, added not a little to her melancholy, by making her feel as if she was utterly deserted. She involuntarily contrasted the solitary evenings she now passed, with the social, the pleasant ones she had been accustomed to spend at Wyefield.

“ Oh blissful evenings !” exclaimed Jacintha, “ more prized in the remembrance, than even in the enjoyment ; for, alas ! we seldom know the full extent of our felicity till it has departed. Will such domestic pleasures ever again be mine ?—shall I again enjoy the social happiness, for which my heart is formed ?—Oh ! my friend, my father (for so I will ever call thee), how prophetic were my feelings upon thy death !—how truly

truly did they inform me, that in losing thee, I had sustained a loss which would bring upon me various sorrows ! Wert thou living, I should not be as I now am, a stranger upon the earth—a being about whom nobody seems interested !”

This idea brought with it an ardent wish to know whether her parents were in existence ; a wish, however, which she endeavoured to dismiss, from the very little probability there appeared of ever having it gratified.

“ If they are dead,” said she, “ and the dead are ever permitted to review this world, perhaps at this very moment they may behold my sorrows with regret—perhaps at this moment——”

Here a low noise startled her ;—she rose with trembling eagerness, but it had ceased ; and concluding it was the moaning of the wind she had heard, she
was

was resuming her seat, when again the noise returned. Ere she could reach the door, however, to which she now hastened, it was thrown open by a housemaid, who entered to make up the fire for the night. A momentary blush suffused the cheek of Jacintha, at the idea of her weakness, in suffering herself to be so easily alarmed ; and she determined no longer to indulge the dejection to which she imputed it, convinced that, if she did, her mind would at length become totally enervated.

“ Lord a mercy, Miss, why didn’t you ring for something for the fire ? ” said the maid.

Jacintha now cast her eyes upon it, and, for the first time, perceived it was almost out ; for she had been too much engrossed by her reflections to attend to any thing else.

She

She learned with astonishment that it was past ten, and that Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy had already retired to their chambers.

“ I dare say, Miss,” said the maid, “ you were surprised at not being called down to tea ;—but, Lord, there has been neither tea nor supper in the parlour to-night.—Master and mistress,” continued she, lowering her voice, and looking back to see whether the door was closed, “ have had a little misunderstanding, I believe ; and so they have gone to their rooms without taking any thing.”

Startled by this intelligence, Jacintha was eagerly opening her lips to enquire what reason she had for supposing so, when a sudden reflection on the impropriety she should be guilty of, in conversing with a domestic on so delicate a subject, prevented her, and made her change

change the enquiry she had been about making, into one of a very different nature ; then taking up a book, she affected to be entirely engrossed by its contents, in order to prevent any further conversation. The girl perceiving this, ceased to speak, and soon withdrew ; but not without offering to bring Jacintha some refreshment, which she declined.

Left again to uninterrupted meditation, she felt more distressed than she had done before, in consequence of what she had just heard ; and, notwithstanding her recent determination to resist the influence of melancholy, she retired to rest with an oppressed heart.

She was relieved from many painful apprehensions concerning Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy, by finding them together, in the breakfast-parlour, the next morning ; but the pleasure this circumstance inspired,

inspired, was soon dispelled by perceiving a deeper shade of melancholy than ever upon their countenances; she found them also more reserved than usual.

The unsocial silence which prevailed, was interrupted, however, ere breakfast was over, by the unexpected arrival of Woodville, who brought with him his usual cheerfulness and vivacity. His appearance revived the languid spirits of Jacintha; in him she beheld a person with whom she could not only converse on the subject most interesting to her heart, but a person who, she imagined, had some regard for her—an idea truly consolatory at this period.

Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy lost somewhat of their gloom on seeing him; but it was evident to Jacintha, that the sudden cheerfulness which brightened their looks, was derived not from any satisfaction

satisfaction they felt at his visit, but from a wish of concealing from him their unhappiness, lest he should attempt to discover the source from whence it originated.

Relative to their unhappiness, or her own, Jacintha resolved not to drop a hint; honour and pride alike prevented her from communicating either. She deemed herself bound to conceal whatever she thought her protectors wished to conceal; and she shrunk from the humiliating idea of having it known to any being, that she was indebted to humanity, not to affection, for an asylum.

She found an opportunity, soon after breakfast, of enquiring from Woodville whether he was yet acquainted with the late discovery respecting her. He replied in the affirmative. He had met Mrs. Greville accidentally in London, he said, and she had informed him of it.

“ But,”

"But," added he, "I could scarcely credit what she told me."

"'Tis but too true, however," replied Jacintha, with a deep sigh, and starting tears; "I belong to nobody!"

"You will not long be able to say so," cried Woodville, affectionately; "you will soon, I hope and believe, belong to one of the noblest, the worthiest of human beings."

The train of sweet ideas which these words introduced into the mind of Jacintha, diffused such a serenity over it, as enabled her, without any great difficulty, to conceal its sorrows, and converse, if not cheerfully, at least composedly, with Woodville.

About the decline of day, a secret impulse carried Mr. Decourcy to the spot where, on the preceding evening,
he

he had met Lord Gwytherin and Jacintha. Woodville perceived him, from the parlour-window, crossing the lawn to the shrubbery ; and not conceiving that he wished to be alone, he followed him thither. Mr. Decourcy could readily have dispensed with his company ; he did not permit him, however, to perceive that he was disconcerted by it, and forced himself to enter into conversation about some improvements he purposed making in the grounds, the ensuing spring.

They had not proceeded far through the shrubbery, when they perceived a man slowly walking before them, who, on hearing their steps, turned round with quickness, and after glancing a moment at them, darted into an obscure path, and disappeared ; but, notwithstanding his disguise, and the precipitation with which he fled, Mr. Decourcy recognized him to be Lord Gwytherin,
and

and starting back, he uttered his name with something like an execration.

“ Lord Gwytherin !” repeated Woodville, with scarcely less emotion, “ what, does he reside in this neighbourhood ?”

“ He has some secret residence in it,” cried Mr. Decourcy, in an accent expressive of displeasure.

“ You have seen him hereabouts then before ?”

“ Yes, yesterday, at this hour, and in this walk, with Miss Greville.”

“ Good God, is it possible !” exclaimed Woodville ; “ surely the meeting must have been accidental.”


“ So she said,” replied Mr. Decourcy, moving towards the house as he spoke ; “ but they appeared in a deep and interesting

interesting conversation, which my approach interrupted; and, from which circumstance, I am rather doubtful of the truth of her assertion."

Woodville felt agitated and alarmed by this intelligence; he began to fear that the insinuating manners of Lord Gwytherin had not altogether failed of making an impression on the mind of Jacintha; else surely, he thought, she could never for a moment have been prevailed on to hold any intercourse with a man, whose conduct to her had been so atrocious—a man whom delicacy and propriety should have made her shun with contempt and abhorrence. He felt deeply interested in her conduct, not only from the regard which his knowledge of her, from her earliest years, had inspired; but because with it was connected the happiness, the honour of the friend he most loved and valued. After a little deliberation, he

resolved on speaking to her concerning it, inform her of what he had heard, and admonish her of the dangers, difficulties, and disgrace which the slightest deviation from propriety could not fail of drawing upon her—the eternal stigma, which would be affixed to her name, if, situated as she was respecting Egbert, she attempted to encourage the attentions of any other man, particularly of such a man as Lord Gwytherin, whose designs relative to her she knew to be of the most injurious nature.

He wished to have enquired into her actions from Mr. Decourcy; but the reserve of his manner, or rather the unwillingness he betrayed to speak upon the subject, prevented Woodville from doing so, and inclined him to believe the apprehensions he entertained of Jacintha's being prepossessed in favour of Lord Gwytherin, were not erroneous; and also that that prepossession had led her
into



into some indiscretion, which had incurred the displeasure of her protectors.

When once a suspicion is excited, the most trivial circumstance can strengthen or confirm it, like glowing embers, which the weakest breath can fan into a flame.

The coldness of Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy's manner, their too visible uneasiness, which not all their efforts could conquer or conceal, counteracted as these efforts were by internal wretchedness, were proofs to Woodville that Jacintha had displeased them; and he felt impatient for an opportunity of warning her of the unpleasant consequences which might, and would, in all probability, result from forfeiting their esteem and affection.

But, eagerly as he sought for this opportunity, it did not occur till the
L 2. ensuing

ensuing morning, when perceiving Jacintha alone in the garden, within the limits of which she had determined in future to confine her rambles, he joined her, and after a little hesitation, and many assurances of being urged to speak, in the manner he was about doing, by his sincere regard and strong anxiety for her happiness, he briefly explained himself.

Jacintha listened to him with profound attention, but by degrees the blush of indignation suffused her cheek, at the idea of his unjust suspicions.— When she reflected, however, that appearances were, against her, and that nothing but real friendship could have prompted him to speak, to counsel her, as he had done, resentment gave way to gratitude ; she warmly acknowledged her obligations to him for his anxiety about her, and hastened to exculpate herself in his eyes. To do this was not a
difficult

difficult matter. Woodville could not doubt her solemn assurances of having met Lord Gwytherin but by accident, and being detained by him against her inclination ; and, perhaps, had Egbert doubted her truth and constancy, he could not have felt a purer joy at finding her able to vindicate both, than Woodville experienced.

CHAP. XII.

“ Forgive me, if I cannot better answer

“ Than weeping.”

Rowe.

WOODVILLE and Jacintha separated soon after the explanation which had taken place between them ; and the former went out to amuse himself, by rambling about the grounds.

As he was returning through the shrubbery, which curiosity to know whether Lord Gwytherin would again be there, induced him to do, he thought he heard a low murmur of voices from a path

path at a little distance, and which was thickly shaded by tall evergreens. With trembling eagerness he paused a moment to listen; then lightly stepping forward, he beheld two persons slowly advancing down the path, one of whom he knew, at the first glance, to be the disguised Lord Gwytherin, and the other greatly resembled Jacintha in figure; but a thick veil which shaded her face, together with the dusky light that now prevailed, for he had prolonged his walk to a late hour, prevented him from distinguishing her features.

Determined not to lose such an opportunity of ascertaining whether the suspicions, which again began to pervade his mind, were well or ill founded, Woodville sprang forward without hesitation; but the moment he did so, Lord Gwytherin and his companion, who had not till then observed him, separated,

and taking opposite directions, were almost immediately out of sight.

Woodville could not hesitate a moment which to follow : his anxiety to know who the lady was, made him eagerly pursue her steps ; but not all the expedition he used enabled him to overtake her, and he reached the house breathless and disappointed.

The first object he cast his eyes upon, on entering the hall, was Jacintha, muffled up exactly as the person was whom he had seen with Lord Gwytherin ;—that she was that person, he now could scarcely doubt ; and it would have been difficult to determine whether regret or indignation were most predominant in his mind at her supposed duplicity. Jacintha, who was ascending the stairs at his entrance, paused to speak to him ; but, instead of replying to what she said, he cast a disdainful
glance

glance upon her, and passed into the parlour.

Confounded by this conduct, Jacintha stood for a few minutes transfixed to the spot ; she could only account for it by supposing that either his suspicions had not been entirely removed in the morning, or had since revived—an idea which wounded her as severely as their disclosure had done ; and nothing but the horror she felt at lying under them, could have induced her to follow him into the parlour, in order to receive an explanation of it ; or, at least, to enquire his motives for treating her in a manner so little expected.

Their long intimacy, the connection which existed between him and the family to whom she had imagined she belonged, and the friendship he had always professed for her, authorized her making this enquiry ; yet, when opening

her lips for the purpose, pride and resentment opposed her utterance, and she burst into tears.

Woodville appeared extremely affected by her emotion.

“ If I have distressed you——” said he.

“ If,” repeated Jacintha ; “ Oh ! Mr. Woodville, can you indeed doubt having done so ?—Can you indeed believe I am so insensible as not to feel, acutely feel contemptuous treatment from those, whose esteem I flattered myself I had possessed. Be assured, nothing could alleviate the anguish it gives me, but the consciousness of not having deserved it.”

“ I must, I do believe you,” cried Woodville, “ notwithstanding all I have heard and seen ;—and I must, I will believe

believe that when you hear what I have to say, you will forgive the pain I have caused you."

He then proceeded to relate the circumstances which had impelled him to act as he had done—circumstances which Jacintha was almost brought to acknowledge were sufficiently strong to lead him into error. She assured him solemnly, that beyond the precincts of the garden she had not been that day, nor meant to go, except she could be assured that Lord Gwytherin had quitted the neighbourhood.

That she was not the person who had attracted him to it, she sincerely rejoiced; who it was that had done so, she could not possibly conjecture; but that it was no one belonging to Mr. Decourcy's family, she was almost certain.

The pardon which Woodville solicited with humility and contrition, she granted, and promised, if possible, to think no more of the uneasiness he had caused her.

CHAP. XIII.

“ She thrice essay’d to speak ; her accents hung,
“ And falt’ring dy’d, unfinish’d, on her tongue,
“ Or vanish’d into sighs ; with long delay
“ Her voice return’d, and found the wonted way.”

DRYDEN.

THE next morning, at breakfast, Mrs. Decourcy proposed to Woodville to drive her out in the phaeton, as the day was remarkably fine, and asked Jacintha whether she chose to accompany them. Jacintha said she would with pleasure, had she not received a letter that very day from Mrs. Falkland (Mr. Frankland’s eldest daughter lately married),

ried), which she wished to answer immediately, as it contained some very severe reproaches for her long silence—reproaches which, she was anxious to convince her friend, she did not merit.

Her excuse was admitted; and, as soon as they drove off, she repaired to her chamber for the purpose of writing a long and explanatory letter. When finished, as Mrs. Decourcy and Woodville were not returned from their ride, and the day still continued fine, though the bright sunshine had gone off, she quitted the house with an intention of walking in the gardens. They lay at a little distance from it, and the intermediate space was thickly planted with trees and clumps of evergreens. From behind one of these clumps, ere Jacintha had advanced many paces, to her great surprise, (for she had no idea of meeting him so near the house) Lord Gwytherin rushed forward, and, ere she could
make

make an effort to avoid him, seized her hand.

“Suffer me to detain you,” cried he, “I conjure, I entreat you—if but for a minute.”

“I will, my Lord,” said Jacintha, with a kind of calm disdain in her voice and countenance, “I will suffer you to detain me, that I may have an opportunity of telling you, if you continue to persecute me in this manner, I must be under the unpleasant necessity of requesting the interference of my friends.”

“Your friends have used me cruelly,” exclaimed he, in a passionate accent, “or you would not speak to me in this manner.—Good God! why have they left it to me to make a discovery so painfully interesting?—Why left it to me—to tell you that——”

He paused, apparently overcome by the violence of his emotions.

Jacintha became agitated ; resentment gave place to curiosity.

“ What,” asked she, in a tremulous accent, and turning as pale as death, “ what is it my friends have left *you* to tell me ?”

“ What I wish I could flatter myself would give you pleasure.”

“ Be explicit, my Lord ;—you torture me by this suspense,” cried she, with increasing agitation.

“ They have left it to me to tell you,” said he, in a solemn voice, and looking earnestly at her as he spoke, “ that I——” He again paused ; for Jacintha seemed ready to drop at his feet.

“ Go

“Go on, my Lord,” cried Jacintha, in a faint voice; “you can scarcely pain me more by any discovery you have to make, than by the conjectures you have excited.”

“They have left it to me then, to inform you,” resumed he, “that I am your father!”

These words acted like an electric shock upon Jacintha; her senses, which appeared gradually receding, were instantly revived;—she shrieked.

“*You* my father!” exclaimed she wildly, “you my father!—Oh God!—it is impossible!”

“You doubt, because you wish to disbelieve,” cried Lord Gwytherin, resentfully; “but Mrs. Decourcy will confirm the truth of my assertion;—she will——”

He

He ceased, for Jacintha at this moment sunk almost fainting against his shoulder, overpowered by the suddenness of this discovery, or rather by the horror she felt at finding herself the daughter of a man who had meditated her destruction.

Terrified by her situation, Lord Gwytherin laid her gently upon the grass, and tried, by chafing her hands, to revive her. In a short time she came a little to herself; but the moment her half-opened eyes glanced upon him, they were again closed, with a shivering sensation of disgust and abhorrence, and she involuntarily withdrew her hand.

“ I see, I see,” cried he, in a voice expressive of resentment and anguish, and starting from the ground on which he had knelt beside her, “ I see, I see you detest me.—Would to God, I had withstood the pleadings of my heart—
you

you would not then have been distressed by the present discovery ; nor should I have been agonized by knowing I was an object of hatred to my child."

" If I have said or done any thing to displease you, my Lord," said Jacintha, who now felt it a duty to endeavour to conceal the sentiments with which he had inspired her, " impute my having done so, not to design, but to the confusion into which surprise has thrown me."

" May I then flatter myself," cried Lord Gwytherin, as he raised her from the ground, " that you really do not hate me ; or rather," added he, hesitatingly, " may I hope that you will endeavour not to do so?—that, when time has proved the sincerity of my affection for you, as well as repentance for the conduct which gave you pain, you will give me a place in your regard ?
Had

Had I sooner known my relationship to you, I should sooner have endeavoured to render myself worthy of that regard, and should also have avoided many errors and indiscretions, which I can never cease to regret."

"Mention them no more, my Lord, I conjure you," cried Jacintha, inexpressibly shocked, as she well knew to what he alluded ;—"for mercy's sake," she exclaimed, with a wildness of look which alarmed him, "never again recur to what is past ! But tell me, tell me," she added, "to what strange cause is it owing, that you were kept so long in ignorance of my connection to you ?"

"To do so," said Lord Gwytherin, "to relate the variety of circumstances which conspired to keep me in ignorance, not only of your affinity to me, but of your very existence, would require

require more time than either of us can command at present."

"Good God!—my very existence!" repeated Jacintha; "I am all amazement at what I hear, and shall know no peace till I am acquainted with the mysterious circumstances you have alluded to.—My mother too—she——"

"Who she is," said Lord Gwytherin, "you shall——"

He was interrupted by Jacintha.

"Who she is," repeated she, and grasped his arm, "she lives then—I have a mother!"

"Who she is," resumed Lord Gwytherin, with a calmness which, had Jacintha been sufficiently composed to have observed it, would have surprised her, "you shall hear, as well as every particular

particular of our unfortunate story, whenever you can give me an opportunity of conversing with you in private."

"In private," said Jacintha, "must it be now in private?"

"It must," replied Lord Gwytherin; "'tis dangerous for us to be seen together."

Jacintha started, and cast an apprehensive glance around.

"I think," cried she, "you spoke as if Mrs. Decourcy knew of our relationship."

"I did," replied he; "she is acquainted with it."

"And she only?" asked Jacintha.

"Yes;

“ Yes ; and with her the knowledge of it must rest. Fame, honour, happiness—nay, life itself depend on its being kept a profound secret.”

Jacintha lifted her hands in astonishment.

“ Oh that you could now,” she cried, “ gratify my ardent curiosity !”

“ ’Tis impossible,” said he ; “ but surely you could soon contrive to give me an opportunity of speaking to you.”

“ I know not how I can do so,” replied Jacintha, “ for I am watched.—I am——” she paused, for she could not bring herself to say she was suspected ; “ could you not, therefore, write ?” she added.

“ Impossible ;—a letter could never fully explain the circumstances you wish
to

to learn. Besides, even if it could, I should be too much agitated in retracing those circumstances, to be able to write."

Jacintha considered for a moment.

"This evening, perhaps," said she,
"I——"

"Hush!" cried Lord Gwytherin, in a low voice; "did you not hear a rustling amongst the trees?"

Jacintha, without attempting to listen, motioned for him to leave her; terrified almost to death, at the idea of his being seen with her by Woodville.

He instantly obeyed her motion, and had scarcely disappeared when she beheld Woodville approaching.

She

She endeavoured to calm her perturbation, and walked towards him as fast as her trembling limbs could carry her.

“Have you been long out?” asked Woodville, as he met her.

“Not very long,” she replied, and tried to shun his eyes as she spoke, from a conviction that her countenance was a faithful index of her mind.

Woodville was too quick, however, in his observations not to perceive at once the disorder of her looks, and, in an accent of surprise, exclaimed—

“Good Heavens! what is the matter? You look pale and frightened! Has any thing happened to alarm you?”

“No, nothing,” said Jacintha, still more agitated, from finding he had

noticed her agitation. She then endeavoured to change the discourse, by asking whether he had had a pleasant ride.

Woodville mused for some minutes before he answered her, and then, in a cold and careless manner, said—

“ Yes, a very pleasant one.”

Jacintha asked a few other trifling questions, which he continued to answer with the same air of indifference, and on entering the house, they separated; Jacintha wounded to the soul by his behaviour, which evidently implied a revival of his unjust suspicions concerning her. That time, however, would prove their unjustness, and fully eradicate them, she could not doubt; and from this idea, felt the pain they at present gave her much diminished.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

“ With how secure a brow and specious form
“ He gilds the secret villain ! Sure that face
“ Was meant for honesty ; but Heav’n mismatch’d it,
“ And furnish’d Treason out with Nature’s pomp,
“ To make its work more easy.
“ See how he sets his countenance for deceit,
“ And promises a lie before he speaks !”

SAID OF DOLABELLA BY ANTHONY.

A FEAR of agitating Mrs. Decourcy, by too suddenly revealing her knowledge of a secret, which it was evident she never wished her to learn, checked the impulse which would otherwise have carried Jacintha immediately to her, for
M 2 the

the purpose of doing so ; and she retired to her chamber, in order to try and compose her spirits ere she appeared at dinner : but to succeed in this attempt was at present impossible. What she had so recently heard, as well as what she still expected to hear, kept her mind in a state of agitation, which rendered all her efforts to regain composure unavailing ; nor could she divest herself of the horror which had seized her the moment she learned she was the daughter of Lord Gwytherin ; and so far from increasing her happiness, she was convinced the late discovery would considerably lessen it, since it could not fail of being a lasting source of anguish to her, to know a parent, to whom her heart could pay no homage, whom she could neither love nor esteem.

In vain she endeavoured to awaken tender sentiments in his favour, by representing to herself his affection for her ; to

which alone she could suppose his disclosing their relationship was owing ; the remembrance of his former conduct could not be obliterated, and her soul recoiled from the idea of even calling him her father.

She rejoiced to think that they would seldom, if ever, be together, in consequence of the necessity there was for keeping their connection a profound secret—a necessity which too clearly proved the unhappy circumstances under which she was born.

With a flood of tears she resigned the pleasing idea she had heretofore cherished, of her parents being virtuous ; yet she still hoped she should hear something that might palliate their conduct.

She regretted not having been more urgent with Lord Gwytherin to inform her who her mother was. A thousand

strange conjectures began to float upon her brain ; and, in consequence of them, she felt pleased she had not been abrupt in her communication to Mrs. Decourcy, and finally determined not to acquaint her with what she had heard, till she had again seen Lord Gwytherin, and conversed with him.

Absorbed in thought, she forgot the lateness of the hour, till restored to recollection by the entrance of a maid-servant, who informed her dinner was nearly ready. Jacintha started up at this intelligence, and hastening to the toilet, began to adjust her dress.

“ I have brought you a letter, Miss,” said the maid, presenting her one as she spoke, “ which Nanny Wilson’s little boy gave me, a few minutes ago, for you. He says it is from his mother, about some work she was to do for you.”

“ For

“For me,” repeated Jacintha, breaking open the letter in astonishment, which was not diminished by perceiving the signature of Lord Gwytherin. The contents were as follow :—

“I am obliged to go to town to-morrow ; and, as I do not know when I may have another opportunity of conversing with you, I earnestly entreat you to let me see you this evening.—Just before we parted, I think you said something of being able to do so. Let me know whether I was mistaken. Be under no apprehension of this letter leading to any discovery ;—the person entrusted with the conveyance of it does not know who it comes from.—Adieu ! Believe me with the truest affection,

“ Your’s,

“ GWYTHERIN.”

Jacintha hesitated a moment, then sitting down to her writing-table, she wrote as follows :—

“ MY LORD,

“ Between the hours of eight and nine, this evening, come to the glass-door, on the south side of the house, which opens from the lawn into the breakfast-parlour. I will receive you there, if it be possible for me to do so ; if not, I flatter myself you will contrive some method of acquainting me with the particulars I am so anxious to learn. With respect, &c.

“ I remain, my Lord,

“ Your obedient,

“ J. G.”

The moment she had sealed her note, which she did not direct, she dispatched

dispatched the maid with it, and crushing Lord Gwytherin's, was proceeding to throw it into the fire, when the sudden ringing of the dinner-bell made her hastily put it into her pocket, and descend, without altering her dress, to the drawing-room, where, besides the usual family party, she found three gentlemen and two ladies, who resided in the neighbourhood, whom Mrs. Decourcy had met in her excursion, and invited to dinner.

Jacintha considered their coming a very fortunate circumstance for her, as she naturally thought Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy's being engaged with company, would enable her to see Lord Gwytherin with greater ease and less danger of detection, than she could otherwise have done; yet, notwithstanding this idea, she still looked forward to her meeting him with trembling apprehension, and so great at times were her

terrors of the consequences which might ensue from doing so, that nothing but her strong anxiety to be informed of her mother, could have kept her faithful to her appointment.

The conversation during dinner was pretty general and tolerably lively, and it was past eight ere the ladies retired from the parlour.

Confused and irresolute, Jacintha hesitated upon the stairs whether she should follow them into the drawing-room or not. During this hesitation, they had entered it, which she no sooner perceived, than she turned into a passage which led to a flight of back-stairs, by which she descended to the breakfast-parlour, where a dull fire still burned ; she fastened the door by which she entered, and then lightly stepping to the one that opened upon the lawn, unbolted it, and beheld Lord Gwytherin
at

at a little distance slowly walking before it. The moment he saw her, he hastened to her, and taking her hand, pressed it in expressive silence to his lips.

Jacintha trembled violently as she admitted him into the parlour, and for some minutes could scarcely articulate a word.

Lord Gwytherin endeavoured to reassure her;—as soon as she was a little composed, he informed her that after they had parted, he had received a letter requiring his immediate return to town.

“ I should have been miserable,” continued he, “ had I departed without satisfying the curiosity I knew I had excited in your mind, and again entreating you to try and overcome the unhappy prejudices which, I know, you have conceived against me.”

“ I am all impatience, my Lord,” said Jacintha, without appearing to notice these last words, “ for the particulars you have promised to communicate. Besides, I am fearful of being too long absent.”

“ I cannot,” said Lord Gwytherin, in a low voice, and seating Jacintha and himself as he spoke, “ reveal the circumstances which you are so desirous of learning, without previously declaring that the errors (if you will permit me to call them by so mild a term), which, in the course of my narrative, I must acknowledge having committed, were owing more to education than to disposition, lest, if wholly unexcused, they should lead you to imagine me totally unworthy of your esteem and regard ; which to obtain would, I assure you, confer upon me the highest happiness.”

Here

Here he paused, and looked earnestly at Jacintha, expecting, perhaps, some complimentary answer from her; if he did so, however, he was disappointed, for Jacintha was too sincere to speak a language foreign to the feelings of her heart, and, after a short silence, he resumed his narrative.

“Instructed rather in the art of gratifying than restraining my passions, which, from being naturally ardent, particularly needed controul; brought up amidst scenes of dissipation, and launched, at an early period of life, into a world abounding with temptations for the rich, the great, and inexperienced—temptations, which sometimes not all the boasted stoicism of the philosopher can enable him to resist; can it excite wonder that I, who neither possessed coolness nor caution, and was a stranger alike to moral precept and example, should yield to their seductions,

seductions, and be led into actions inconsistent with virtue?"

Here he again paused, in hopes, perhaps, of hearing something from Jacintha, which might enable him to ascertain whether she admitted the apology he offered for his conduct; but she was silent, and he soon proceeded.

“ The sensibility of my heart, and the warmth of my disposition, rendered me particularly susceptible of the attractions of your sex; but, notwithstanding the homage I paid to them—the tenderness, the admiration they inspired, I was resolutely determined against marrying; not so much, from a consciousness of any inconstancy in my temper, as from the many instances I had seen of conjugal infidelity and infelicity.—If I ever felt inclined to change this resolution, it certainly was in favour of your mother, who was undoubtedly

undoubtedly the most lovely and bewitching creature I ever beheld."

"Tell me," cried Jacintha, no longer able to controul her strong impatience, "tell me," said she, scarcely able to speak, and involuntarily resting her hand upon his arm, "who was my mother?"

"A sister of Mr. Decourcy's."

"Good Heavens! a sister of Mr. Decourcy's!" exclaimed Jacintha, with uplifted hands and eyes.

"Yes;—she was educated in Ireland, and sent, when about seventeen, to an aunt in London, for the purpose, I believe, of being advantageously settled. She received the very particular attentions I paid her, almost from the moment we became acquainted, with evident pleasure; but, notwithstanding my vanity, that
vanity

vanity so natural to the youthful mind, I could not avoid perceiving I was more indebted for her smiles to my rank and fortune, than to my person and accomplishments. I was piqued on making this discovery. We all like to be regarded merely for our own merits, and not for any accidental advantages we may possess; and, in consequence of it, I thought myself justifiable in forming designs against her. In these designs I was soon too successful: while she imagined she was drawing me into her net, I completely entangled her in mine.—You shudder; my conduct certainly was very culpable, and I review it myself, I assure you, with very great remorse: but, after all, it is your total ignorance of mankind which makes it appear so very atrocious to you.—Vices and virtues are lessened and increased by comparison; and I have no doubt, when you acquire a greater knowledge of the world, of the deceits which are practised,

practised, the dreadful crimes that are daily perpetrated in it, that you will look with more lenity than you do at present upon my actions."

"Heaven forbid," said Jacintha, "that I should only be taught mercy for the frailties of one fellow-creature, by hearing of the superior enormities of another!"

"And yet nothing is more common, nothing is more natural," cried Lord Gwytherin; "we think of the plunderer with indignation till we hear of the assassin; and rail with severity against the flattery of the sycophant, till we hear of the ingratitude of the friend."

"I allow the justness of what you say, my Lord," replied Jacintha; "but pray proceed in your narrative—I am all impatience to learn the fate of my unfortunate mother."

"Sorrow

“Sorrow and repentance followed her deviation from virtue,” continued he, “both of which, I assure you, I afterwards felt in their fullest extent for my conduct towards her.”

“Tired by her incessant reproaches and importunate demands to make atonement for her wrongs, I at length detached myself entirely from her, and flew to amusement, as a resource against the regret and compunction which would now and then, even at that period, when I was volatile and unthinking, misled by company, and hardened by example, obtrude upon my mind on her account.”

“Ah!” said Jacintha, involuntarily, “you might have found a much easier and more effectual way of banishing those feelings, than by flying to dissipation.”

Lord

Lord Gwytherin sighed deeply, or at least affected to do so ; and, after the pause of a minute, proceeded.

“ I almost dread to go on,” said he, “ lest I should injure myself irrevocably in your opinion.”

“ Oh my Lord !” exclaimed Jacintha, “ surely you would not have the barbarity to leave me in this state of suspense ?”

“ Well,” said he, “ I will proceed, begging you to remember that if my enormities have been great, my penitence is sincere.—In a short time after I had bidden your mother a last adieu, I became acquainted with Mrs. Decourcy ;—she was then unmarried ; from the beauty which she still possesses, you may judge what she must have been in the early part of her life. To the unrivalled loveliness she then possessed,
were

were united a simplicity, an innocence irresistibly attractive. I beheld her with instantaneous admiration, and as instantly resolved to attempt the conquest of her heart. Success crowned the attempt; but the designs I hoped to accomplish, in consequence of that success——”

“ Were defeated,” exclaimed Jacintha.

“ They were;—through your mother’s means she was rescued from my snares.”

“ Oh blessed and happy interference !” cried Jacintha.

“ Be assured,” said Lord Gwytherin, “ though provoked and disappointed at the time I lost her, I have since sincerely rejoiced at her preservation, after what had passed; for she eloped from her home with me, under an idea that my intentions

intentions were honourable. She could not think of returning to her friends; she was therefore compelled to accept the protection of your mother; and fortunate was it for her that she did so, as it was the means of introducing her to the amiable man she afterwards married. From the period I lost her till the present, I never saw her; nor, without the utmost difficulty could I now procure an interview with her, though I came hither merely for that purpose."

"But she was the person whom you met in the demesne," said Jacintha.

"She was," replied he. "On coming hither, I took up my abode in an obscure inn at Hatfield, from whence a confidential servant had a letter conveyed to her by a country-boy, containing an earnest request from me, to be permitted to converse with her a few minutes in private relative to you.
She

She at first refused this request; but, on its being repeated, at length consented to meet me; but not all my solicitations could prevail on her to make you acquainted with the secret of your birth, for the purpose of doing which I alone sought an interview with her?"

"And what reason," asked Jacintha, rather hesitatingly, "did she assign for wishing me not to know it?"

"Oh! many reasons, too tedious here to repeat, none of which I could allow to be just; in short, my heart was bent upon making the discovery, for I could not endure the idea of still continuing to be an object of terror and aversion to you. Besides the love I felt for your mother—a love which, little as my conduct agrees with the assertion, never knew any great diminution, urged me to assure her child of my affection, and
endeavour

endeavour to inspirè her with some degree of reciprocal tenderness.

“ As I could neither intrude into Mrs. Decourcy’s house, nor force her to reveal the secret I was so desirous you should hear, I resolved, from time to time, to hover about your habitation till I could obtain an opportunity for disclosing it myself. I have at length succeeded in doing so ; and should it occasion any alteration in your sentiments—should it create in your bosom any interest in my favour, I shall feel greater happiness than I ever before experienced. Tell me then, my dear and charming girl; tell me that you will, in future, try to look upon me as a father, and forget and forgive my past offences ?”

“ May Heaven forgive them !” said Jacintha.

His

His Lordship piously ejaculated, "Amen!" Then taking her hand, he was pressing it with fervour to his lips, when Jacintha, shuddering, involuntarily drew it from him.

Immediately, however, recollecting herself, she said, though without returning it—

"I hope, my Lord, I shall never be forgetful of the duties of a daughter."

"Those duties," thought she, "which were so early taught me by the best of men.—Ah! if he who now acknowledges himself my father, resembled him whom I so long believed to be so, what very different feelings should I at this instant experience!"

"I am sure you never will," replied he, "and I derive pleasure from the assurance; but it is a pleasure, damped by

by the idea of not being able to acknowledge you publicly, and proudly boast to the world of such a daughter ; but the fame of your mother, as well as many other considerations, totally prevent such a measure."

" You have not yet, my Lord," said she, " gratified my anxious curiosity respecting my mother ; nor informed me by what, or rather by whose means I was placed under the care of Mr. Greville."

" Your mother," resumed his Lordship, " made Mrs. Decourcy her confidant ; and she was the person who consigned you to the protection of Mr. Greville, to be brought up as his child, and with a strict injunction to secrecy, which I am certain he would have adhered to ; but——"

His Lordship piously ejaculated
 “Amen!” Then taking her hand which
 was pressing it with fervour to
 when Jacintha, shuddering, -
 rily drew it from him. Our relation-

Gwytherin, re-
 Immediately, how confusion, “I would
 herself, she said, you with it, had not
 turning it— persuaded me from doing

any of arguments not ne-
 “I hope to mention; but so restless
 forgetful how happy did I feel in consequence

ag to them, that I was on the
 “of returning to Wyefield, when I
 we heard an account of his death, and
 r his departure from it.”

“But my mother,” interrupted Ja-
 cintha, “tell me, my Lord, of her.”

“She lives,” said he, “in the pos-
 session of every blessing this life can
 bestow.”

Jacintha

Jacintha started, and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

“The possession of happiness and
resumed he, “she lives; a
wife, an estimable mother;
loved by her intimates, and admired
by all who know her.”

“Then I find,” said Jacintha, “I have been utterly mistaken;—I imagined my mother to be the eldest sister of Mr. Decourcy, who, many years ago, I have heard Mrs. Decourcy say, conceived a dislike to the world, and retired to a Convent in France, though without taking the vows.”

“No,” replied Lord Gwytherin, “your mother is his youngest sister, the Countess of Dunsane. Soon after your birth (of which it was her intention I should never hear), she accompanied some friends to the Continent,

where she met the Earl, the descendant of a noble Irish family; who, in consequence of their attachment to the cause of James the Second, lost the principal part of their property in Ireland; but, by splendid alliances in France, regained nearly an equivalent for it. The Earl became her captive almost the moment he beheld her, and soon made proposals, which she accepted without hesitation ”

“ Without hesitation !” repeated Jacintha.

“ Yes ;—by him she has obtained dignities she was always ambitious of possessing, and has two lovely daughters, over whom she watches with all the solicitude of a tender parent.”

“ Is she then so much engrossed by these happy daughters,” said Jacintha, with starting tears, “ as to be utterly regardless

regardless of me?—Alas ! have the unfortunate circumstances under which I was born, drawn so great a curse upon me, as to deprive me of my mother's love?"

" Regard for her reputation prevented her from noticing you," cried Lord Gwytherin ; " but I cannot suppose you are either forgotten or disregarded."

" Oh ! could I hope so," said Jacintha, " Oh ! could I hope ever to be known to her—ever to experience from her the kindness, the attention of a mother, what happiness should I derive from the idea !"

" Well, do not despair," replied Lord Gwytherin ; " some lucky chance may yet introduce you to her ; and I am certain she could not know you, without admiring and esteeming you."

“ I wish I could think so,” said Jacintha, with fervour. She then proceeded to ask so many questions concerning this mother (for whom, notwithstanding the high disapprobation with which her conduct had inspired her, she felt all her tenderness awakened), that Lord Gwytherin at length became weary of answering her, and shifted the discourse, to question her, in his turn, concerning Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy’s conduct towards her. On this she expatiated with all the warmth of gratitude, carefully avoiding any expression which could convey an idea of her ever having thought their affection on the decline.

Lord Gwytherin professed himself highly pleased with what she told him ; but begged to know whether she yet knew what their intentions were respecting her.

“ I

“ I never bestowed a thought upon such a subject, my Lord,” replied Jacintha.

“ Well, well, I dare say they’ll act nobly by you,” said his Lordship.

“ They have already done so, my Lord,” cried Jacintha, warmly ; “ but for them, disclaimed and unacknowledged as I was, without a home, without a refuge, in how unpleasant a situation might I have been at present ! ”

“ True,” said he, with an indifference in his manner which hurt Jacintha, and seemed strange after his professions of affection for her ; “ true, their taking you under their protection was a very fortunate circumstance indeed ; and I assure you I should be much more miserable than I am at present, from not being able to take you under mine, but

for the happy manner in which you are situated."

Jacintha sighed deeply, but did not speak ; and he proceeded to ask her a few other questions relative to Egbert, which she answered very briefly, as they evidently appeared to her to be dictated more by curiosity than any solicitude about his welfare.

He then rose to depart ; but ere he bade her adieu, he put into her hand a miniature resemblance of himself, which had been presented by him to her mother, and returned by her, when all hopes of an honourable union between them were dissolved. Jacintha received it with trembling emotion—what her fancy immediately represented to her, had been bedewed with the repentant tears of a mother, and placed it in her bosom.

He

He repeated his assurances of regard, and expressed his earnest hopes that she would endeavour to cultivate other sentiments for him, than those he feared she at present entertained; and made her promise she would, as often as possible, give him an opportunity of conversing with her, which, he said, he doubted not she would often have the power of doing, through Mrs. Decourcy's means, to whom he supposed she meant to communicate what he had told her.

Jacintha replied in the affirmative.— For her intended communication to Mrs. Decourcy she had indeed a double motive: first, to obtain a more circumstantial account of the particulars she wished to learn than she had received from his Lordship, whose broken, disjointed, and cursory narrative had not by any means gratified her curiosity;—and, secondly, to consult with her how she should regulate her actions with respect to him; for since

their relationship was to be kept an inviolable secret, she dreaded, from the peculiar delicacy of her situation, the irreparable injury she might do herself by having any correspondence with him. And yet, notwithstanding this dread, she almost felt a reluctance to decline it entirely, from the impression which his repeated assurances of affection had made upon her. Could she have looked into his heart, however, this reluctance would instantly have vanished ; for she would then have perceived that he was not more a stranger to any thing like tenderness for her, than to any thing like repentance for his past enormities ; that the most selfish considerations had alone induced him to disclose the secret of her birth ; and that, had she been unnoticed by her present protectors, she never would have been noticed by him.

When

When his atrocious designs against her impelled Mr. Greville to divulge the connection between them, he perfectly agreed with that good man, in thinking it right to keep her still, as well as every other person, in ignorance of it.

The remorse and horror with which his conduct towards her had involuntarily inspired him, were of short duration, and on quitting the country, he ceased entirely to think about her; nor was she ever recalled to his remembrance till he heard of her being taken under the protection of Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy, and that she was considered as the person who would possess the largest portion of their wealth.

The advantages which might, nay would result, he doubted not (from her general character, and his own knowledge of her disposition), to him here-
 after,

after, from his relationship to her being known, immediately occurred to him, and determined him to conceal it no longer from her.

The measures he took to put this determination into execution, have been already explained. He possessed too much discernment not to discover the feelings which Jacintha at present entertained for him ; but he flattered himself his affected tenderness, and insinuating manners, would by degrees completely overcome them, and give him such an ascendancy over her mind as, for his own sake, he wished to acquire. Though he doubted not her receiving a more particular account of past occurrences from Mrs. Decourcy than she had received from him, he felt no great apprehensions at this idea ; as he was almost persuaded that Mrs. Decourcy was far too amiable to dwell upon any circumstances, which had a
tendency

tendency to create or strengthen a prejudice in the bosom of a child against a parent.

“ My ardent anxiety to discover my parents, is then at length satisfied,” said Jacintha to herself, as Lord Gwytherin departed from her ; “ but has its being so occasioned me any pleasure?—Ah ! no. Whilst they were unknown to me, I believed them virtuous, and rejoiced in the belief ; but now——”

She checked the reflections that were rising in her mind, and crossing the room with cautious steps, unbolted the door.

CHAP. XV.

“ Methought, ev’n now, I mark’d the starts of guilt

“ That shook her soul.”

ROWE.

“ Under how hard a fate are women born !

“ Priz’d to their ruin, or expos’d to scorn !”

WALLER.

TO give a just idea of the consternation into which Jacintha was thrown, when, on opening the door, she beheld Woodville speaking to a servant within a few paces of it, is utterly impossible. She started back, and for a minute remained immoveable ; then recollecting
that

that her confusion of itself was sufficient to confirm any suspicions he might entertain against her, she again came forward, and passed him in silence to the staircase. Had she indeed been inclined to speak to him, his conduct would have effectually prevented her from doing so; for, as she approached, he turned from her with an angry and contemptuous glance, which clearly proved the ideas that then predominated in his mind.

Confused and agitated, Jacintha would have preferred going to her chamber to the drawing-room, had she not feared exciting unpleasant enquiries or surmises, by longer absenting herself from the latter; thither therefore she repaired, and found all the dinner party assembled. No questions were asked concerning her long absence from the company, and she would have felt happy, could she have flattered herself no
observations

observations had been made upon it : but that this was not the case, the behaviour of Woodville convinced her ; and she resolved on acquainting Mrs. Decourcy the next morning with what she had heard this day, and advising with her on what measures she should take for endeavouring to remove his injurious ideas respecting her. Soon after she had entered the drawing-room, he returned to it, but continued cool and reserved throughout the evening.

The uneasiness of Jacintha was considerably increased by finding, on retiring to her chamber, that she had dropped Lord Gwytherin's letter from her pocket. She would immediately have gone in search of it, could she have flattered herself the search would prove successful ; but that this would be the case she could not think, from the length of time which had elapsed since she lost it. She dreaded its having
fallen

fallen into Woodville's hands, from the necessity such a circumstance would lay her under of revealing (in order to remove the unpleasant suspicions it must naturally confirm in his mind) the truth concerning Lord Gwytherin, which she could have wished, from pride as well as other feelings, only to have disclosed to Egbert.

The agitation of her mind precluded sleep; and, at an early hour the next morning, she was in the breakfast parlour, where she endeavoured to amuse herself by reading, till Mrs. Decourcy made her appearance.

"I have got a letter for you, Jacintha," said Mrs. Decourcy, as she entered the parlour.

"For me, Madam," cried Jacintha, in a joyful accent; for it instantly occurred

curred to her that she had found the letter about which she was so uneasy.

“ Yes ;—Woodville set off for town this morning before it was light ; and, in a letter which he left for me to apologize for his abrupt departure, owing, he said, to the sudden recollection of some business he had to transact in town to-day, he enclosed one for you ; about the contents of which, he added, if I felt curious, he was certain you would inform me.”

“ Undoubtedly, Madam,” said Jacintha, as she received the letter, which contained the following lines :—

“ I should ill deserve a title which has hitherto given me pleasure—the title of your friend, if, perceiving the dangers you are incurring, I did not warn
you

you of them. The most fatal consequences can scarcely fail of resulting from your continuing to have private interviews with Lord Gwytherin. If your heart feels a preference for him, for Heaven's sake, avow it to those who have a right to enquire into his intentions respecting you (which Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy undoubtedly have, from your being under their immediate protection), and no longer trifle with your reputation and happiness—blessings which, be assured, if once lost, can never be regained.—The most ardent solicitude about your welfare has dictated this letter, and to hear you have attended to it, will confer real pleasure upon

“ H. WOODVILLE.”

“ How unfortunate,” thought Jacintha, “ that he should have left the
country

country with such unfavourable impressions against me !”

“ What’s the matter, my dear girl ?” asked Mrs. Decourcy, with a greater air of cheerfulness than she had for a long time before spoken to Jacintha, observing her change colour ; “ I really am beginning to feel some curiosity about the contents of that letter, since I perceive it has affected you.”

“ Your curiosity shall be gratified after breakfast, Madam,” replied Jacintha, “ if you will permit me to attend you to your dressing-room. I have much besides the contents of this letter to impart to you.”

“ To me,” said Mrs. Decourcy, with a look expressive of surprise ; and she was about making some enquiry, when
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the entrance of Mr. Decourcy prevented her.

Jacintha could no longer entertain the smallest doubt of Woodville's having found her lost letter, and discovered her interview the preceding evening with Lord Gwytherin. She was not mistaken in thinking so; he had indeed done both. On rising to accompany the other gentlemen to the drawing-room, he found the letter, which she had drawn from her pocket with her handkerchief, near his chair, and which an irresistible curiosity immediately prompted him to read. Fired with indignation by its perusal, he hastily ascended to the drawing-room, to see whether she was there; on missing her, and learning from Mrs. Decourcy, to whom he made a trembling enquiry respecting her, that she had been long absent, he abruptly quitted it, for the purpose

purpose of searching for her without the house ; and was taking his hat from a servant, when he heard her unbolting the parlour-door, and saw her coming from it.

A sudden impulse of resentment and disdain made him turn from her, and he did not re-enter the drawing-room till the agitation, which her supposed duplicity had thrown him into, had in some degree subsided.

To remonstrate with her upon the impropriety of her conduct, after all he had already said to her upon that subject, would, he feared, be unavailing ; and the only expedient he could devise for saving her from the destruction he believed impending over her, was to acquaint the friends, with whom she resided, of the danger she was incurring. From an open and abrupt disclosure,
however,

however, his feelings revolted; all he could bring himself to do, was to lead to an enquiry which should discover it. For the purpose of exciting this enquiry, he contrived a pretext for writing to Mrs. Decourcy, dropping such hints in his letter to her, about the one he enclosed in it for Jacintha, as could not fail, he thought, of making her solicitous to learn its contents, and oblige Jacintha to disclose them.

The moment breakfast was over, Mrs. Decourcy repaired to her dressing-room followed by Jacintha, whose promised communication she was impatient to hear. The emotions she betrayed, while listening to it, were not inferior to those Jacintha manifested.

“ I own,” said Mrs. Decourcy, after she had concluded, “ I was very unwilling you should be acquainted with
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the secret of your birth, from a conviction that the knowledge of it could impart no happiness to you.—’Tis infinitely more distressing, I think, to know we have relations, who either cannot, or will not acknowledge us, than to know we are unconnected. But, since Lord Gwytherin has disclosed what I was so desirous of concealing, I can have no objection to gratifying the curiosity he has excited. The account he has given of past circumstances is brief indeed, and slightly has he touched upon his own conduct; this, however, is but natural: we generally draw our own portraits in flattering colours. Do not imagine, however, from what I have said, that I think him now by any means the character he formerly was; no, I really am inclined to believe him sincerely penitent for his past errors.”

“ I hope so,” said Jacintha, with fervour.

“ Indeed I cannot doubt his being so,” continued Mrs. Decourcy ; “ and, but for the idea I have already mentioned, and some apprehensions I shall hereafter explain, I should, without hesitation, have introduced him to you by his proper appellation. That he disregarded all I said, to dissuade him against the discovery he has made, I do not wonder at ; for who that had such a child, would not wish to claim her, if but for the purpose of trying to inspire her with favourable sentiments for them ? ”

“ Could I hope my mother would ever receive me——” said Jacintha.

“ Publicly she never can,” replied Mrs. Decourcy ; “ nor, situated as she

is at present, could she in any manner do so."

Jacintha sighed, and remained silent for some minutes; she then entreated Mrs. Decourcy to favour her with the particulars she was so desirous of learning.

END OF VOL. II.



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